Semester description:

**MA in Global Refugee Studies (GRS)**

**7th semester (1st semester of the MA)**

**Methodology and Methods** (5 ECTS)

**International Development** (5 ECTS)

**Theories of International Relations** (5 ECTS)

**International Relations and International Law in a Refugee Context** (5 ECTS)

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**Information about the semester**

School: The School of Political Sciences

Study Board: Board of Studies for International Affairs

Regulations and Curriculum:

GRS: [https://studieordninger.aau.dk/2022/35/3522](https://studieordninger.aau.dk/2022/35/3522)

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**Description of the semester:**

The 7th semester at GRS consist of 3 courses taken as a combined oral course exam, the title of the exam is *International Relations and International Law in a Refugee Context* (15 ECTS) and the three courses are *International Development*, *International Law in a Refugee Context* and *Theories of International Relations* furthermore is there an exam in the *Methodology and Methods* course (5 ECTS)

**International Development (5 ECTS)**

“International Development” is the first of two courses that explore different theoretical perspectives on refugees and immigrants from the perspective of political philosophy, social science and anthropology. The second course is offered in the spring 2022 and is entitled “Culture, Identity and Politics”. The overall idea behind the two courses is that we start from a birds-eye perspective by investigating how refugees are governed in today’s world by sovereign nation-states, humanitarian organizations and public and private industries before we in the spring 2022 zoom in on the refugees’ own subjective experiences of conflict, flight and arrival.

Theoretically, the two courses create a movement from political philosophy and post-structuralists’ approaches towards more experience-near and phenomenological approaches. As such this theoretical movement is designed to make students familiar with some of the fundamental, and different, disciplinary approaches, which have dominated the fields of refugee and forced migration studies.
The central aim of the two courses is to: 1) introduce central concepts and theoretical discus-
sions within studies of refugees 2) enhance the students’ analytical and critical skills and 3) equip
students with multidisciplinary tools they can use to engage in problem-based learning processes.

At the practical level, the courses consist of four four-hour seminars, each of which explores a
specific theme.

**International Law in a Refugee Context (5 ECTS)** The objective of this course is to provide stu-
dents with basic knowledge on refugee protection in international law. The course is organised as a
seminar series around four themes:

(I) Refugee Protection - Framework and Key Rights and Principles

(II) Inclusion Criteria

(III) Loss and Denial of Refugee Status, and

(IV) Persons otherwise in Need of International Protection.

The following issues are explored during the seminar series:

- The interface of refugee law with public international law, including human rights and treaty
  law

- The role of institutions such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UN-
  HCR) and the EU

- Key refugee rights and principles of international refugee law, including introductory observ-
  ations on the concept of asylum and refugee rights and with emphasis on the principle of
  *non-refoulement*

- The 1951 UN Refugee Convention definition and complementary forms of protection, in-
  cluding the role of human rights

- The concept of inclusion, loss and denial of refugee status, also introduced by way of a
  mock court case featuring a gender related asylum claim

- Other topical issues such as ‘war-refugees’, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and the so-
  called “climate refugees”.

- The role of international refugee law in specific contexts, for example the ‘war on terror’
  and the current ‘European refugee crisis’.

This course interacts with ‘Theories of International Relations’ and ‘Political Change and Develop-
ment’. The purpose of the three courses in conjunction is to establish an overview of theories re-
lated to refugees and forced migration issues from a political, economic and legal perspective.

**Coordinator:** Steffen Jensen
Lecturers: Zvezda Vankova

Format: The course is organised as a seminar series and consists of lectures, group work and workshops with a focus on generating and facilitating student participation. The duration of each theme is 4 hours (2 hours x 2 seminars).

Readings: Readings can be found under each seminar title respectively. Mandatory readings for each seminar amount to approximately 40 pages.

Theories of International Relations (5 ECTS) According to the UNHCR, (Global Trends in Forced Displacement – 2020) more than 82 million people are forcibly displaced worldwide. Developing countries have taken in about 86 percent of the world’s refugees and 73 per cent of refugees and forcibly displaced individuals live in countries neighboring their countries of origin. Complex factors ranging from wars, conflict, violence, human rights violations, and disasters have converged to spur worldwide forced displacement.[2] Against this backdrop, tensions between balancing “the rights of others” (Habib 2000) against the rights and obligations of sovereign states have arisen, backfiring on refugee protection.

Departing from the complex linkages between refugee rights and perspectives, state interests and global governance, this course will familiarize students with the nexus between the discipline of International Relations (IR) and the politics of forced migration.

Divided in three core parts, it will explore ways of conceptualizing and practicing IR with regards to the politics of forced migration and refugee perspectives.

The first conceptually led part will provide an overview of the core concepts, theories, and debates in International Relations that are crucial to understanding responses and processes of displacement. Drawing on a variety of conceptual approaches, we will explore the extent to which IR theories provide explanatory tools for understanding refugee trajectories and histories. More specifically, we will explore whether and if so, how IR theories provide us with “world-shaping views” to analyze the multiplicity of dynamics, histories and actors that have shaped the politics of forced migration. In this section, we will also discuss how theories such as transnationalism, subaltern and feminist geopolitics have challenged IR statist approaches, shifting the gaze to refugee-led perspectives.

In the second part, we will explore different ways and scenarios of practicing IR to understand the relationship between forced migration and world politics. Several case studies will help us to problematize how states have cooperated on displacement and produced policies that have marginalized and securitized refugees. We will also look at how organizations such as the UNHCR, UNRWA and the EU have shaped practices of refugee humanitarianism. Moreover, we will look at the linkages between forced displacement, geopolitics, and international security. This section will place special emphasis on some challenges that characterize international policy responses to displacement. Examples are discrimination, statelessness, and confinement to refugee camps.

The third part shifts the focus to International Relations from below, highlighting reciprocal perspectives at the heart of forced displacement and world politics. Drawing on IR strands of thought that stress the importance of emotions, relationality, and bottom-up governance, we will touch on the lived experiences, narratives, and voices of refugees. In this section, we will also familiarize
ourselves with some research methods and methodologies that account for refugee agency and aspirations.

The course is based on lectures, interactive discussions, group work and ideas lab in which students will be confronted with various texts, scenarios, and research dilemmas at the core of world politics and refugee protection. The following overarching question will guide all sessions: How might the field of refugee and forced migration studies complement the discipline of IR in terms of providing creative openings and alternative knowledge systems?

**Methodology and Methods (5 ECTS)**

Methodology is central to the social sciences. Often, however, methodology gets reduced to what kind of interviews is employed and qualitative versus quantitative analysis. Social science and humanities methodology involves a range of different techniques like discourse analysis, household surveys, archival research, narrative analysis, ethnographic analysis to mention just a few. These are all distinctly different and can help us answer very different question. It is crucial that students (and researchers) constantly reflect on what the limitations and what the strengths are of each of them. This is, so to speak, the heart of the academic enterprise. While topics can be relevant and interesting, it is the methodological considerations that we engage in which constitute a given piece of work as academic or not. The objective of this course is therefore to ‘increase the methodological awareness and reflection in GRS student projects’. While we can talk of methodology in the abstract, it is best taught very close to practice – much in line with Problem-Based Learning as the central pedagogical tool of AAU and GRS. Hence, in this course, we will make our point of departure the projects of 7 semester students who participate in the course. The specific aims of the course (the learning goals) then are to 1) help students and project groups to engage in methodological discussions and reflections; 2) be able to reflect methodologically on the works of others and 3) increase the level of methodological reflection in the written assignments.

**Organisation of the semester**

The semester is divided into two parts: course work (20 ECTS) and project work (10 ECTS). All information regarding objectives, content, scope, teaching and learning methods, schedule, prerequisite requirements for participation, general and specific learning objectives, assessment criteria and examination forms can be received from GRS: [https://studieordninger.aau.dk/2022/35/3522](https://studieordninger.aau.dk/2022/35/3522)

For detailed course/lecture information, reading material and teacher’s PPT documents, please refer to [https://www.moodle.aau.dk/](https://www.moodle.aau.dk/)

**Semester coordination and secretariat**

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