

Questions and Assigned Readings | Week 1 (2 September 2026)

Please complete the following assigned readings before the first session of our class on September 2nd, 2026. I have listed the readings below, which you can find on Moodle under Week 1. Below those readings, I have included a brief overview of how they each relate to one another as well as a list of questions for you to consider. Try to answer as many as you can, but don't feel like you need to address them all comprehensively. After getting to know one another in class on Wednesday, we'll discuss the syllabus and dive into these questions, which we'll return to in the weeks that follow.

Assigned Reading:

Matthew Carr, "A Gated Continent," *Fortress Europe: Dispatches from a Gated Continent* (2016), 11-24.

Astride R. Zolberg et al., "Who is a Refugee", *Escape from Violence* (1989), 3-33.

Peter Gatrell, *The Making of the Modern Refugee* (2013), 1-13.

Jérôme Elie, "Histories of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies," *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (2014), 23-32.

Note on the reading: You do not need to remember every detail or date in these articles, but it would be useful to write down key dates (year or decade only) and organizations that are mentioned in more than one text. You will not be tested on precise chronology or minutiae, but we will encounter them again and again over the course of the semester and it is good to begin orienting yourself now.

You will encounter many historical events and organizations with which you are unfamiliar. Don't panic! You are not alone! **Make a point of looking up one or two terms or events that were new to you, and come prepared to explain them to a classmate.** If you do not know something, I guarantee you that others are in the same boat. We will do a lot of teaching and learning from one another in this seminar. Focus on looking up a few new names or events each week, and we'll all build a fuller picture of them as we go along.

Overview:

These texts offer you an introduction to refugees as a field of scholarly inquiry.

The Matthew Carr piece provides a brief history of European borders, technologies for policing them, and the emergence of refugees as a category.

Astrid Zolberg's and Peter Gatrell's texts offer both concise histories of refugees and reflections on the study of refugees. One of the goals of this course is to study both refugees as well as the ways that scholars have approached them previously. Zolberg and Gatrell cover much of the same ground. What topics and issues do they each mention that the other omits? Which topics and issues do you find most interesting?

While Zolberg and Gatrell are narrative histories of refugees that include reflections on the development of the field, the Jérôme Elie article is an example of what we refer to in history as "historiography" (the history of history writing), meaning that it is entirely devoted to tracing how that field has evolved. We are examining both refugees and the development of the study of refugees because this course will guide you through the process of identifying a topic of interest, researching it, and conducting a review of existing scholarship in which you will reach your own conclusions about how the subject could be studied differently going forward.

Guiding Questions for Week One:

Who are "refugees"? How has this category evolved over time? "Refugee," "displaced person," "forced migrant," "asylum seeker": to what extent are these terms synonymous, slightly different, or entirely distinct? Why do scholars say that defining the term "refugee" has been so fraught?

What scholarly disciplines (e.g. history, sociology, etc.) are concerned with refugees? What are the differences between these disciplines? What discipline do you know best (i.e. what fields are you majoring and minoring in?)?

What are research methodologies? Can you think of an example of a method that is commonly used in a discipline with which you are familiar?