Migration and Gender: Legal, Sociolinguistic and Literary Perspectives

September 18-22, 2023

Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice
The Summer School on Migration and Gender offers an interdisciplinary approach to the ways in which migration intersects with gender. Gender is a constitutive element of migration. The course will discuss both this idea, and reversing the formula, it will examine the role of migration in shaping gender, understood as relational and performative. A particular focus will be on identity in relation to human rights and law, language, labor and culture. The course is an innovative exploration among three scholars in legal studies, literature and sociolinguistics, and the students.

Each discipline brings a unique perspective on the problem and set of instruments to analyze and deepen our understanding of migration and gender.

Law is a fundamental aspect in the analysis of migration. Women have always migrated, but what has changed is so not much the number but rather the reasons why they migrate. The course will endorse a gender intersectional perspective in international human rights law in order to grasp the complexities of migration flows. It will stress how violence can determine migration, but is also an element present during migration and in the country of destination. It will look into the concept of vulnerability, discrimination and persecution, and will take into consideration climate change-induced migration.

Literature offers the imagined experience of an individual and a community, and a micro-level examination of how migration shapes identity, fuels vulnerability and influences gender performance. Literature gives voice to the marginalized; it counters assumptions, imagines the unimaginable, expresses the taboo, and opens alternatives to normative discourse. We will discuss two short novels: Adua by Igiaba Scego and On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous by Ocean Vuong. Adua portrays the evolving self-awareness of a young Somalian woman who is brought to Rome to star in a pornographic film. On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous vividly depicts the coming-of-age of a Vietnamese boy raised in the US by a mother and grandmother whose lives were shattered by the war.

Languages are key in the migration experience. Migrants bring with them complex sociolinguistic repertoires, including languages learned through different steps on their journey. We will explore
migrant trajectories, including return migration and onward migration, as well as issues of language acquisition in the destination country, and language maintenance/shift of linguistic and cultural heritage. Furthermore, we will discuss whether destination countries might fail to recognise individual accomplishments or expertise, and their attitudes towards the languages and cultures of migrants. We will explore these issues with examples from student experiences, a discussion on the movie *Io sono Li* (Shun Li and the Poet), a visit to a Refugee Residence in Venice, and a visit to the island of San Lazzaro, one of the most important cultural centres of the Armenian diaspora.

The program is particularly timely in this moment of history, in which migration is transforming societies and shaping gender. The course embraces both questions: migration and gender, and explores their intersection in a creative and dynamic way. Courts at all levels have started to delve into the legal question surrounding the conditions of recent migration with multiple cases of persecution, sexual exploitation, and vulnerability, and they have done so without always being able to encompass the complexity of intersectional grounds of discrimination.

The course will model the ways in which the humanities and the imagination as well as the social sciences might inform legal processes or contour legal decisions. This will play out in two ways: first in our class discussions, and second through the students’ experiences of rewriting a legal decision from the perspective of what they have learned and discussed. In short, we hope that this course will educate a young generation of lawyers, academics and activists by raising awareness of many issues at the intersection of gender, migration and law.

VIU programs are characterized by interdisciplinarity and interculturalism. It is the perfect place for such an innovative project to start and develop. The course will introduce the gender rewriting for the first time as participatory exercise, combining literature, sociolinguistics and law.

Faculty
Sara De Vido, Ca’ Foscari University of Venice, Italy
Laurie Shepard, Boston College, USA
Francesco Goglia, University of Exeter, UK

Who is it for?
Applications are welcome from current MA and PhD Students in Sociology, Anthropology, Gender studies, Literature, Human Rights, Law, Labor and Cultural studies.

Methodology and structure
The first four days of the course will be divided into two parts, the first establishing geographical, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds for the novels, and exploring identity particularly as it expresses migrant issues of vulnerability and marginality; the second dedicated to a broad general understanding of the legal issues surrounding migration and gender. On the final day, the workshop will propose a gender-sensitive rewriting of a judgment on migration (see for example, Hodson and Lavers (eds), *Feminist Judgments in International Law*, Hart, 2019). This exercise will specifically focus on the often-neglected question of how gender is shaped by migration. The rewriting will not necessarily be a legal brief, but could also take the form of poems, short stories, art, videos. The class will be divided into groups to work on these forms of rewriting. The results will be presented in the final day of the course.

Learning outcomes for participants
Students will learn:
- How to read and critically examine novels on the topic of gender and migration;
- How to connect the legal aspects to the literary ones, and how to draw them out from a reading, that is, which questions transcend the particular circumstances of plot or culture;
- How to analyze judgments and decisions from a legal point of view;
- How to rewrite a judgment / decision using a gendered approach.

A list of materials, will be provided for students to read and prepare before the course starts.

Credits
A Certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the course.
Number of ECTS credits allocated: 2

The Program will admit 20 student participants.
**Fees**

Students of VIU member universities:
€ 350 incl. VAT.

Students of other universities:
€ 700 incl. VAT.

The fees will cover tuition, course materials, lunches in the VIU cafeteria and Social events. Student participants will be responsible for covering their own travel expenses to and from Venice, accommodation and local transportation.

VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

PhD candidates and post-docs from universities in EU universities may be eligible for Erasmus+ mobility grant support. Candidates should consult the International Office in their own university for information about the calls for applications for funding. VIU will provide any supporting documentation requested for such applications. Contact VIU Erasmus office: erasmus@univiu.org

**Accommodation**

In shared rooms (triple) with other participants at Combo, Venezia: € 462 VAT included for 6 nights with breakfast (municipal tax included). Further information will be available in the Application form.

Accommodation Location:
Combo, Campo dei Gesuiti
Cannaregio, 4878
30121 – Venezia
[https://thisiscombo.com/it/location/venezia/](https://thisiscombo.com/it/location/venezia/)

**On-line application**

January 19 - May 21, 2023
via the VIU website

Students will be notified by June 1, 2023, and asked to pay the tuition fee and accommodation fee (if requested) by June 11, 2023.

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate’s research interests, a curriculum vitae and a photo.

**Venice International University** is a consortium of 20 universities, representing 14 countries throughout the world.

The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research and training/capacity-building program. Students from non-member universities may participate in selected academic programs.

The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

**Location**

![Location](image)

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