

**Empowerment Practice with Refugees: Transnational Identities  
in Communities in Transition  
Eritrea, Horn of Africa, and the USA**

**Course URL: <http://courses.washington.edu/commtran>**

**Course e-mail: [commtran@u.washington.edu](mailto:commtran@u.washington.edu)**

**Instructor: Nancy Farwell Telephone: 616-2339**

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**Fridays, 9:30-12:20, Room B14; additional class meetings will be arranged**

**Instructor in our partner course at University of Asmara: Dr. Lizy James**

Through classroom activities and interactive discussion among UW class participants and social work students in our partner class at the University of Asmara, Eritrea, students will learn applications of empowerment practice with displaced populations across a transnational continuum of forced migration, including flight, internal displacement, asylum-seeking, repatriation and reintegration, and resettlement. The class will address complexities of transnational identities and implications for strengths-based social services. Students will also have opportunities to participate in agency-based collaborative projects with local agencies serving Horn of Africa populations.

This course has been designed with a triple purpose:

- 1) This is a binational class, with a parallel section offered to undergraduate social work students at the University of Asmara, Eritrea. Students at both institutions will have the benefit of enhancing cultural competency and understanding of migration through feedback and collaboration on assignments with students at the partner school. Case examples for the course will draw from the Eritrean experience of conflict, forced migration, repatriation and resettlement, from Seattle's East African communities, and from diverse analyses of forced migration.
- 2) The course examines the processes that characterize the transitions of displaced women, children, youth, and families within their country of origin and in resettlement in the United States, including: a) an overview of the historical events and processes that have resulted in the mass displacement of people; b) selected policies and service programs that have been developed to assist refugees in transition; and c) refugee trauma, adaptation, and integration after repatriation or resettlement.
- 3) The course also examines interventions with displaced women, children, youth, and families across a variety of community settings and agency programs, with a focus on a) mutual

assistance, psychosocial support, gender and family issues, youth assets development, and community mobilization, b) participatory approaches to program development, and c) the importance of multicultural understanding in social work practice. A wide array of strengths-based and empowerment approaches to social work practice in home, school, agency, and community contexts constitute the interventive focus of this course.

### **Course objectives**

Upon completion of the course, the participants will be able to:

1. Understand causes and impacts of forced migration on refugees, resources, and social work practice with refugee women, children, youth, and families.
2. Communicate with Eritrean social work students at the University of Asmara on issues of mutual professional interest, with increased cultural competence and understanding.
3. Appraise responses of international and local service providers along the relief-to-development continuum, and in resettlement.
4. Analyze the chronic stressors, gender, and identity issues accompanying conflict, forced migration, repatriation, and resettlement.
5. Evaluate the particular issues of refugee women, children, youth, and families in ecological context, and apply this knowledge in social work practice.
6. Apply knowledge of refugee family and intergenerational resources and conflicts in social work practice.
7. Identify refugee trauma and related interventions to promote psychosocial health.
8. Apply knowledge of U.S., Eritrean and East African culture pertaining to refugee issues in originating and host countries.
9. Promote the development of appropriate services to refugees across multiple settings and levels of social work practice.
10. Interact and problem-solve at an international and multicultural level with a greater degree of cultural competence
11. Identify services and resources for Eritrean and Horn of Africa displaced persons in the local setting.

## TEXTS AND REFERENCES

### **Required Text**

Course reader: available for purchase at RAMS on the Ave – you are strongly encouraged to get a copy of the reader. A copy of the reader is also on reserve at the SSW library, and on electronic reserve. Additional readings may be assigned as needed.

Mezlekia, N. (2000). Notes from the Hyena's Belly. New York: Picador USA. (Ethiopia)

### **Recommended texts**

Matsuoka, A. & Sorenson, J. (2001). Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of Identity and Community in an African Diaspora. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. On reserve in the SSW library.

Farah, N. (1999). Maps. NY: Penguin. (Somalia) On reserve in the SSW library.

Tesfagiorgis, A. (1992). A Painful Season & A Stubborn Hope. Trenton, NJ: The Red Sea Press. (Eritrea) On reserve in the SSW library.

**Additional recommended readings, films, and references:** May be placed on reserve at SSW Library or posted on class website, as indicated in the course outline or in class.

### **Academic Accommodations:**

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 206-543-8924 (V/TTY). If you have a letter from Disabled Student Services indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so we can discuss the accommodations you might need for this class.

## STRUCTURE OF THE COURSE

The course is offered in a lecture – seminar format that combines lecture, discussion, and student presentations. Participation by all the members is important; students are expected to attend all classes, to prepare for class by completing the readings and assignments, and to participate in class discussions. Please inform me if you are unable to attend class. Students are expected to participate as both teachers and learners, in a climate that is respectful of diversity. Formulation of course projects will begin in the first two weeks, based on student interests, and will form a nucleus for integrating major themes and practice foci of the course. Students are encouraged to form cooperatives for discussion, reading, and collaboration on course projects.

This is a 5-unit course. Classes will meet regularly from 9:30 to 12:20 on Fridays. Additional class meetings / discussion groups will be scheduled regularly to facilitate communication with our partner students. We are also planning to arrange a workshop with local East African social service providers. In addition, there will be agency-based meetings for collaborative course

projects, and group meetings to discuss books, films, and newcomer orientation to the Pacific Northwest.

### **COURSE GRADES WILL BE BASED ON THE FOLLOWING:**

Regular attendance

Preparation for and participation in class discussion and activities

Structured and unstructured communication with our partner students on a regular basis.

We'll discuss this in class and develop guidelines together

Completion of the following assignments and activities.

- ◆ Your biosketch: as soon as possible after our first meeting.  
Send to Edgar Hernandez: ehernan@u. with a copy to me at [commtran@u](mailto:commtran@u).
- ◆ Orientation to the people, landscape, societies and cultures of East Africa: **due 4/9**  
Many country descriptions that are available for this part of the world focus on war, disaster, famine, and security issues. In order to honor the more complex realities that exist and that are inextricably interwoven with identity, memory, homeland, and exile, student groups are asked to research and write up a brief overview of a selected country: Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, and Sudan. There are many possible sources for your research, including those on the web, histories, films or videos, and personal narrative. Do give references for the material you use. Your overviews will be posted on the course website.
- ◆ Read Mezlekia's book, Notes from a Hyena's Belly, and post discussion questions on the web by **4/23**. After group discussion, post a short review related to themes relevant to the class. Compare and contrast your views and perspectives on the book. **Due no later than 5/7**.
- ◆ Feature an agency serving Horn of Africa populations. Visit the agency, meet with key personnel, write a 2-page description and post it on the course website. Include an agency brochure if available. **Due no later than 4/30**
- ◆ Summary of a key informant interview conducted with a service provider or service user from an East African community agency. Post on the website, subject to consent of Interviewee. Confidentiality and anonymity will be discussed. **Due 5/14**
- ◆ Course project and final paper: It will be important to identify your projects as soon as possible – preferably by the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the quarter (**April 16**), so that we can incorporate your learning needs into the class. Projects will be presented in a workshop format during the last two sessions of the class, **May 28 and June 4**. Guidelines for course project and paper will be finalized with respect to the nature of the project, and summarized on a handout. Final paper due **June 4**.

You are encouraged to develop a course project in cooperation with a student in our partner class at the University of Asmara.

Agency-based course projects could include one of the following:

- Development of a resource guide
- Researching and writing a project proposal for services
- Documentation of youth program activities
- Powerpoint presentation for introducing the agency, its history, background, services, needs, resources, and potential

Evaluation of your projects will be based on the strengths and comprehensiveness of your critical analysis, integration of pertinent concepts and practice approaches, the organization and clarity of your presentation, and the organization and clarity of your writing. Please keep your final papers to 12 pages. Be sure they are edited for typos, grammar, organization, and narrative coherence and flow.

*Local cultural events for your calendar:*

Invitation to an evening with Horn of Africa youth group: to be scheduled  
Folklife Festival: May 28-31 at Seattle Center. This year's festival features the Horn of Africa.

## **COURSE OUTLINE**

### **Week 1 – April 2**

#### **Introduction to course**

Forced migration in the Horn of Africa: An overview

Transnational identities in times of political conflict and its aftermath

Video: Bricks for Peace (excerpts)

Kibrom Tekeste, Director

### **Week 2 – April 9**

**Responses of international and local policy makers and service providers**

**Complex emergencies and humanitarian response**

**From policy to practice: Human rights, Refugee policies, receiving communities, repatriation, and resettlement in Eritrea and among Horn of Africa populations in Seattle**  
**Illustration and discussion of resources and challenges of forced migration among refugee families**

## **Readings:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora

Ch. 1: A ghost story

Ch. 2: A haunted house

Malkki, L. H. (1995). Refugees and exile: From "refugee studies" to the national order of things. Annual Review of Anthropology, 24, 495-523.

Farwell, N. (2001). 'Onward Through Strength': Coping and Psychological Support Among Refugee Youth Returning to Eritrea From Sudan. Journal of Refugee Studies, 14(1), 43-69.

Sharma, S., Abatena, H., & Langston, E. (2000). Ethiopian migrants and their adjustment in the United States. Guru Nanak Journal of Sociology, 21(1-2), 29-38.

Woldemikael, Tekle M. (1998). Eritrean and Ethiopian Refugees in the United States. Eritrean Studies Review, 2(2), 89-109.

## **Recommended:**

U.S. Committee for Refugees (2001). Getting home is only half the challenge: Refugee reintegration in war-ravaged Eritrea. (On reserve at SSW library.)

## **Week 3 – April 16**

**Chronic stressors and the construction of identity in post-conflict or resettlement contexts**  
**Exile**

**State power vs. individual autonomy**

**Ethnic identity, nationalism, racism, and xenophobia**

**Practice: Preparation for participant observation and informational interview with agency staff at an agency serving Horn of Africa populations.**

**Entering a community, as an outsider. How might one be regarded, what self-awareness work do you need to do; what preparation is needed**

**Discussion of agency visits**

## **Readings**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora

Ch. 3: Shadowlands: Diaspora movements

George, U. (2002). A needs-based model for settlement service delivery for newcomers to Canada. International Social Work, 45(4), 465-480.

Henry, S. (1999). Ethnic identity, nationalism, and international stratification: The case of the African American. Journal of Black Studies, 29(3), 438-454.

Majodina, Z. (1989). Exile as a chronic stressor. International Journal of Mental Health, 10(4), 421-442.

McSpadden, L.A. (1998). "I must have my rights!": The presence of state power in the resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees. In R.M. Krulfeld & J.L.MacDonald (Eds.), Power, ethics and human rights: Anthropological studies of refugee research and action. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publisher, Inc. 147-172.

Mayadas, N. S. & Elliott, D. (1992). Integration and xenophobia: An inherent conflict in international migration. Journal of Multicultural Social Work, 2(1), 47-62.

### **Optional:**

Rousseau, C., Said, T., Gagne, M., & Bibeau, G. (1998). Between myth and madness: The premigration dream of leaving among young Somali refugees. Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry, 22, 385-411.

### **Week 4 – April 23**

#### **Trauma**

**Coping strategies, resources, facilitating factors, and barriers**

**Social identity group membership: cross-cultural issues**

**Psychosocial support in situ, Exile**

**Clinical and contextual practice concerns**

**Role of state, local agencies, and mutual assistance associations**

**Discussion of agency visits: Post your featured agency on the web by 4/30**

### **Readings:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora  
Ch. 4: Exile, memory, and identity

Agger, I. & Jensen, S. B. (1990). Testimony as ritual and evidence in psychotherapy for political refugees. Journal of Traumatic Stress, 3(1), 115-130.

Bracken, P., Giller, J. E., & Summerfield, D. (1997). Rethinking mental health work with survivors of wartime violence and refugees. Journal of Refugee Studies, 10(4), 431-442.

Brzuzy, S., Ault, A., Segal, E. (1997). Conducting qualitative interviews with women survivors of trauma. Affilia, 12(1), 76=83.

Rasmussen, O. V. & Lunde, I. (1989). The treatment and rehabilitation of victims of torture. International Journal of Mental Health, 18(2),122-130.

Zarowsky, C. (2000). Trauma stories: Violence, emotion and politics in Somali Ethiopia. Transcultural Psychiatry, 37(3), 383-402.

## **Week 5 – April 30**

### **Gender roles in family and community context**

**Traditional; transitional; new obligations and resources**

**Gender issues in program development and services**

**Women’s rights as human rights: The role of transnational women’s associations**

**How do we assess needs, resources, and barriers in a participatory way?**

**Overview of participatory needs assessment approaches**

**Come with interview guide and contact information for person you will interview. Discuss interview process and content for informational interview.**

**Informational interview with East African service provider to ascertain the major issues, concerns, accomplishments, setbacks, etc., with the service population. What are the needs, how are they being assessed; what are the gaps, and what needs to be done.**

**Analysis of interviews: insider / outsider perspectives; relationships between agencies and community members**

**Funding, “power” – how is power constructed or defined?**

**Responsiveness of programs to multigenerational needs**

### **Readings:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora

Ch. 5: Gender relations in the Diaspora

Hale, S. (2001). Women in post-war Eritrea: Liberated but not free. In S. Meintjes, A. Pillay, & M. Turshen, Eds., The aftermath: Women in post-conflict transformation. London: Zed Books, 122-141.

Matsuoka, A., & Sorenson, J. (1999). Eritrean women in Canada: Negotiating new lives. Canadian Women’s Studies, 19(3), 104-109.

McMichael, C. (2002). ‘Everywhere is Allah’s place’: Islam and the everyday life of Somali women in Melbourne, Australia. Journal of Refugee Studies, 15(2), 171-188.

McSpadden, L. A. & Moussa, H. (1993). I have a name: The gender dynamics in asylum and in resettlement of Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees in North America. Journal of Refugee Studies, 6(3), 203-225.

Mohamed, H. S. (1999). Resistance strategies: Somali women's struggles to reconstruct their lives in Canada. Canadian Women's Studies, 19(3), 52-57.

Odede, Rachel (2001). The continuum of violence against women in Eritrea. Development, 44(3), 69+.

### **Recommended:**

Kumsa, M. (2002). Negotiating intimacies in a globalized space: Identity and cohesion in young Oromo refugee women. Affilia, 17(4), 471-496.

### **Week 6 – May 7**

**Gender (continued): education, capacity-building, health and mental health issues  
Strengthening families**

**How do we assess needs, resources, and barriers in a participatory way (cont.)?**

**Uses of participatory approaches to assess domestic violence in refugee communities**

**Write up the major substantive issues that emerged from interview with Horn of Africa service provider, along with observations, reflections, and critique of interview process**

### **Readings**

Bar-On, A. & Prinsen, G. (1999). Planning, communities and empowerment: An introduction to participatory rapid appraisal. International Social Work, 42(3), 277-294.

DePoy, E. Hartman, A., & Haslett, D. (1999). Critical action research: A model for social work knowing. Social Work, 44(6), 560-569.

Kreitzer, L. (2002). Liberian refugee women: A qualitative study of their participation in planning camp programmes. International Social Work, 45(1), 45-58.

Matsuoka, A. & Sorenson, J. (1991). Ethnic identity and social service delivery: Some models examined in relation to immigrants and refugees from Ethiopia. Canadian Social Work Review, 8(2), 255-268.

Musser-Granski, J; Carrillo, D. F. (1997). The Use of Bilingual, Bicultural Paraprofessionals in Mental Health. Community Mental Health Journal, 33(1), 51-60.

Noponen, H. (1997). Participatory monitoring and evaluation – A prototype internal learning system for livelihood and micro-credit programs. Community Development Journal, 32(1), 30-48.

## **Week 7 – May 14**

### **Youth in transition: Youth assets programs, youth mobilization Newcomers in the schools Transnational youth movements and their role in mobilizing youth**

#### **Discussion of Interview assignment**

#### **Readings:**

Ghebretensae, Z., Leghesse, S., Radeny, S. Gryboski, K., & Mohamud, A. (1998). Mobilizing Eritrean youth toward the eradication of female genital mutilation (Summary report). Asmara, Eritrea: NUEYS.

Howard, D. E. (1996). Searching for resilience among African-American youth exposed to community violence: Theoretical issues. Journal of Adolescent Health, 18(4), 254-262.

Lowry, D. (2002). Raised in different places: Intergenerational relationships of immigrants and refugees in three Seattle communities. Master's Thesis. Seattle: UW School of Public Health.

O'Melia, M. and Dubois, B. (1994). From problem-solving to empowerment-based social work practice. In L. Gutierrez & P. Nurius, Eds., Education and research for empowerment practice. Seattle: Center for Policy and Practice Research, University of Washington School of Social Work, 161-169.

Rappaport, J. (1995). Empowerment meets narrative: Listening to stories and creating settings. American Journal of Community Psychology, 23(5), 795-807.

Rousseau, C. Said, Taher, M., Gagne, M-J. & Bibeau, G. (1998). Resilience in unaccompanied minors from the north of Somalia. Psychoanalytic Review, 85(4), 615-637.

#### **Optional:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora  
Ch. 6: Abyssinian fundamentalism and Diaspora Mythico histories (on reserve in SSW library)

## **Week 8 – May 21**

### **Family transitions Communication Multigenerational concerns**

Youth assets development and community mobilization among multiethnic youth  
Mediation in family conflicts

#### **Readings:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora*  
Ch. 7: More real than a shadow

Kohli, R. Social work with unaccompanied asylum-seeking young people.

Okitikpi, T. & Aymer, C. (2003). Social work with African refugee children and their families. *Child and Family Social Work*, 8, 213-222.

Pallotta – Chiarolli, M. & Skrbis, Z. (1994). Authority, compliance and rebellion in second generation cultural minorities. *ANZIS*, 30(3), 239-271.

Phinney, J. S. & Chavira, V. (1995). Parental ethnic socialization and adolescent coping with problems related to ethnicity. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 5(1), 31-53.

Sharon, N. & Shwartzman, O. (1998). Professional and traditional collaboration in the mediation of family conflicts: The case of Ethiopian immigrants in Israel. *Mediation Quarterly*, 16(1), 3-13.

## **Week 9 – May 28**

### **Empowerment practice with refugees and immigrants Transnational identities In-class presentations.**

#### **Readings**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, *Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora*  
Ch. 8: Phantoms of Identity and ‘Race’

Bernal, V. (2001). Eritrea and the global village: Reflections on nationalism in a transnational era. Retrieved Feb. 15, 2003 from University of California Los Angeles, Department of Sociology website: [www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/groups/ccsa/bernal.pdf](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/groups/ccsa/bernal.pdf)

McSpadden, L. A. (1999). Assessing essential qualities of communities: Eritrean refugees' resistance and return. In J. Lipson & L. A. McSpadden, Eds., *Negotiating Power and Place at the Margins: Selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants, Vol. VII*. Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association.

## **Week 10 – June 4**

### **Empowerment practice with refugees and immigrants**

#### **Transnational identities**

#### **In-class presentations**

#### **Readings:**

Matsuoka and Sorenson, Ghosts and Shadows: Construction of identity and community in an African Diaspora  
Ch. 9: Ghostly returns