

Migrant Workers in Contemporary Asia

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Course language: English, Mandarin

Level: undergraduate and graduate

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Dominant literature in migration studies argues that international labor migration is an experience of upward economic mobility and freedom. This mini course will explore the applicability of this dominant assumption on Asian labor migrations, which constitute a significant volume of today's international migration. We will ask: How do labor and the lived experiences of work shape processes of contemporary migration? Drawing on empirical cases of study of labor and migration across contemporary Asian routes, we will examine salient processes of labor migration, analyze the ways that sending and receiving states and societies discipline migrants through the control of labor rights and work, and identify the ways migrants utilize multiple social, economic, cultural, gendered or religious resources to navigate the various structural inequalities they confront in the process of migration.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will gain a deeper understanding of the complex socioeconomic and geopolitical contexts of contemporary Asian migrations.
- The assigned texts will introduce students to key concepts and interdisciplinary approaches in the study of labor, migration, work and globalization.
- The assignments for the class will enable students to (1) enhance their critical reading and writing skills, (2) develop communication skills through class presentations and discussions, and (3) develop analytical skills.

ASSESSMENT

Reading Responses (30%): Students must write one critical reading response to a text of their choice (the texts for their group presentation are excluded). They can be on any class weeks during the semester, but you must submit at least one the 4th week.

A critical reading essay should be between 700-1000 words. It must be an analytical response to the assigned materials.

Your reading response must:

- Summarize, in your own words, the main arguments advanced by each of the required texts;

- Discuss how the texts relate to each other. For example, you may discuss overlapping themes and compare/contrast their research methods and arguments.
- Link the text to related historical and contemporary examples in or beyond the geographical region of Asia. You must cite your source in your discussion.

In-class group presentation (50%): Students will make one (or two - depending on the students' number) in-class group presentation every class week. The group presentation will be about the weekly topics and the assigned texts. A group presentation should last about 30 mins, and will be accompanied by a power point (or any other visual support) and followed by a short collective activity arranged by the students.

Your presentation must:

- Include the assigned texts but it can go beyond that. You can include other sources - journal articles, book chapters, books, films, documentaries, etc.
- Summarize, in your own words, the main arguments advanced by each of the required texts or the used sources.
- Critically engage with the texts discussions and discuss how the texts relate to each other. For example, you may discuss overlapping themes and compare/contrast their research methods and arguments.
- Link the assigned texts to related historical and contemporary examples in or beyond the geographical region of Asia.
- Include a short interactive activity with the class.

In-class participation (20%): Students are expected to regularly attend class, closely engage with class readings, and actively participate in discussions and activities.

COURSE SCHEDULE (Tentative)

Week 1 (3 hours)

Part 1: Course introduction and theoretical framework

Compulsory reading:

Faist, Thomas. 2012. Toward a transnational methodology: Methods to address methodological nationalism, essentialism and positionality. *European journal of international migration* 28(1): 51-70. Doi: 10.4000/remi.5761

Complementary reading:

Glick Schiller, N., & Salazar, N. B. (2013). Regimes of mobility across the globe. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 39(2), 183-200.

Part 2: Documentary screening: 'Border People', by Elena Barabantseva

Part 3: Labor, migration and globalization: Who are migrant workers?

Compulsory reading:

Parreñas, Rhacel Salazar. 2015. *Servants of Globalization: Migration and Domestic Work*, Second Edition. Stanford: Stanford University Press. (Chapter 1)

Complementary reading:

Sassen, Saskia. 2003. "Global Cities and Survival Circuits." In *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 1st ed, pp 254–74. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Week 2 (3 hours)

Part 1: To flee is to be free? Borders and mobility regimes

Compulsory reading:

Parreñas, R. S. (2021). Discipline and empower: the state governance of migrant domestic workers. *American Sociological Review*, 86(6), 1043-1065.

Complementary readings:

Silvey, Rachel. 2007. "Unequal Borders: Indonesian Transnational Migrants at Immigration Control," *Geopolitics* 12(2): 265-279.

Hwang, Maria Cecilia. 2018. "Gendered Border Regimes and Displacements: The Case of Filipina Sex Workers in Asia." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43 (3): 515–37.

Part 2: Migration and globalized work regimes: Evidence from the factory of the world

Compulsory reading:

Ngai, P. (1999). *Becoming dagongmei (working girls): the politics of identity and difference in reform China*. *The China Journal*, (42), 1-18.

Complementary reading:

Liu, S. D., & Shi, W. (2017). Worker struggles and factory occupation in China during the current economic crisis. *Social Movement Studies*, 16(3), 355-360.

Week 3 (4 hours)

Part 1: Ethnicized labor regimes and inequality: Case study of Filipino and Indonesian maritime workers in the global economy

Compulsory reading:

McKay, S.C., 2022. Navigating race: intersectional boundary-making onboard transnational ships. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 45(4), pp.697-717.

Complementary reading:

Parhusip, J. (2023). Emerging port infrastructure and advocacy networks for migrant fishers in Taiwan. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 32(2), 371-383.

Part 2: Documentary screening: 'Lovely Strangers' by Tsai Tsung-hung

Part 3: Migration governance and human trafficking: Evidence from Vietnamese migrants

Compulsory reading:

Hoang, L. A. (2020), 'Debt and (un)freedoms: The case of transnational labour migration from Vietnam', *Geoforum*, 116, pp. 33–41.

Complementary readings:

Ho, E. L. E., & Robinson, C. D. (2018). Introduction: Forced Migration in/of Asia—Interfaces and -Multiplicities. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 31(3), 262-273.

Bélanger, Danièle. 2014. "Labor Migration and Trafficking Among Vietnamese Migrants in Asia." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 653(1): 87-106.

Week 4 (3 hours)

Part 1: Wife of Worker? Marriage migration and reproductive labor

Compulsory reading:

Piper Nicola. 2006. "Gendering the Politics of Migration" *International Migration Review* 40(1): 133-164. doi: 10.1111/j.1747-7379.2006.00006.x

Complementary reading:

Friedman, Sarah, 2010. Marital immigration and graduated citizenship: post-naturalization restrictions on mainland Chinese spouses in Taiwan. *Pacific Affairs*, 83(1): 73–93.

Part 2: Labor migration and the care economy: Domestic workers in Singapore and the UAE

Compulsory reading:

Parreñas, R. S., Silvey, R., Hwang, M. C., & Choi, C. A. (2019). Serial labor migration: Precarity and itinerancy among Filipino and Indonesian domestic workers. *International Migration Review*, 53(4), 1230-1258.

Complementary reading:

Wee, K., Goh, C., & Yeoh, B. S. (2019). Chutes-and-ladders: The migration industry, conditionality, and the production of precarity among migrant domestic workers in Singapore. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(14), 2672-2688.

Week 5 (3 hours)

Part 1: 'Connected migrants' and ethnic entrepreneurship: The case of Chinese digital entrepreneurs

Compulsory reading:

Zani, Beatrice. 2021. Digital entrepreneurship: E-commerce among Chinese marriage-migrant women in Taiwan. *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 17, no. 2 (2021): 265-292.

Complementary reading:

Martin, F. (2017). Rethinking network capital: Hospitality work and parallel trading among Chinese students in Melbourne. *Mobilities*, 12(6), 890-907.

Part 2: Migrant workers' activism and social movements

Compulsory reading:

Piper, N., Rosewarne, S., & Withers, M. (2017). Migrant precarity in Asia: 'Networks of labour activism' for a rights-based Governance of migration. *Development and Change*, 48(5), 1089-1110.

Complementary reading:

Yeoh, B. S., Goh, C., & Wee, K. (2020). Social protection for migrant domestic workers in Singapore: International conventions, the law, and civil society action. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 64(6), 841-858.