David Yee  
History Discipline

Instructor Guide

Walking in their Shoes

U.S. Asylum Policy: Past and Present

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| Problem | Failure of current U.S. asylum policy to address pressing needs and urgency of global migrant crisis. |
| Target Audience | College/University; History, Ethnic Studies |
| Length of Time | Two Weeks |
| Abstract | This assignment allows students to gain an intimate understanding of today’s refugee crisis by writing a declaration letter for asylum in the United States. |
| Student Learning Outcomes | Students develop a historically informed perspective on current migration policy and gain empathy for asylum seekers. |
| Student Resources | Primary Documents (UN, US), Powerpoint presentations, “How the U.S. has Treated Wartime Refugees” (video), “U.S. Immigration Debate” and “Refugee Act 1980” (background articles), Equity Data Resources, Understanding Inequities Resources |
| Instructor Resources | Primary Documents (UN, US), Powerpoint presentations, “How the U.S. has Treated Wartime Refugees” (video), “U.S. Immigration Debate” (background article), writing guides and samples, Equity Data Resources, Understanding Inequities Resources |
| Teaching Notes | The wars and conflicts of the twentieth century continue to exert a strong influence on America’s migration policies. After the United Nations established a framework for refugee and asylum policy in the 1950s, the United States interpreted and adapted its own laws in the 1970s, culminating in the 1980 Refugee Act. Today, ongoing crises of refugees seeking asylum dominates the headlines and animates political debates. Students will utilize historical documents to gain a clear understanding of what differentiates a refugee from an immigrant and apply that understanding to present day debates. In this assignment, students will write a letter of application for refuge (“Asylum Declaration”) from the perspective of a migrant seeking asylum in the United States. They will choose a country of origin and write a statement detailing why they should receive asylum in the United States. In completing this assignment, students will gain a clearer understanding of what factors cause migrants to arrive to the United States and what standards are used to determine if a person(s) should be granted asylum. Students will utilize a primary sources and background articles on applying for refugee status to complete this assignment. |
| Learning Product | Paper |
| Assessment | Rubric on quality of writing. |