Human migration is as old as humanity itself; the nation-state system of borders and passports is but a few centuries old. Political movements, media reports, and changing conceptions of race, ethnicity, and citizenship testify to the ways international migration has challenged one of the basic elements of the modern world: a rationalized system of nation-states, able to exercise sovereign control over identities, economies, and territories.

This course teaches students how to think about these developments. In so doing, it takes the perspective that migration has been shaped by economics, politics, policies, identities, cultures, and mentalities throughout the globe. Thus, reading assignments, lectures, and in-class activities span a variety of disciplines and examine different types of sources, including academic books and articles in history and the social sciences, first-person migration narratives, literature, photography, and film.

The course is organized both chronologically and thematically, helping students understand how global migration and its associated phenomena have changed over time, and therefore, how they might change again in the future. Lectures and readings will provide a global perspective but focus on case studies, often using the methodology of comparison to better understand the issues at hand.