

# LATER LIFE LEARNING

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## **SERIES C: Canada's Response to Refugee Migration: An Historical Overview**

**Friday, 1:00 pm to 2:45 pm, September 21 – November 23, 2018**

**Innis College, Town Hall**

### **Lecturer:**

*Rebecca McTaggart recently retired from her position as a Director General of the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada. While at the IRB, her responsibilities included leading regional operations for processing refugee claims from Mexico, China (Falun Gong), Colombia and Sri Lanka (Tamils). She led the work on managing refugee hearings for two marine arrivals (the Ocean Lady and the Sun Sea) and was responsible for the implementation of significant legislative changes that came into effect in 2012.*

### **Overview:**

Throughout its history, Canada has been a refuge for those fleeing persecution. This course will provide the opportunity to explore the history and development of refugee migration to Canada through case studies. It will also provide an overview of the legislative framework governing refugee determination and how it has changed and responded to evolving migration patterns and world events.

### **1. September 21: Background**

We will start with an introduction to laws governing refugee determination in Canada, including a review of the United Nations Convention on Refugees (the 1951 and 1967 Protocols), Canada's response to the protocols and an overview of Canadian law governing refugee determination.

### **2. September 28: Early Arrivals**

Although legislation governing refugee determination would not be introduced to Canada until mid-20th century, there is a strong historical tradition of Canada providing refuge. We will examine three such arrivals: the Huguenots in Nouvelle France – individuals seeking religious freedom; the United Empire Loyalists – individuals seeking political freedom; the Underground Railroad – British North America as a safe haven for slaves.

### **3. October 5: European Refugees – Late 1700's to the present**

World events changed and influenced Canada's role as a country of refuge. We will review Western European migration to Canada including Highland Clearances, Irish Famine, European Displaced Persons (post WW II), Hungary, Czechoslovakia and the Roma.

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## **4. October 12: The Americas**

North, Central and South America are our closest geographical regions for migration. We will focus on how the Chilean military coup reshaped Canada's policies toward refugee settlement. We will also consider countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Jamaica and the United States of America.

## **5. October 19: South-east Asia**

The arrival of the Komagata Maru in 1914 caused a serious political crisis when this ship arrived in Vancouver with 376, mostly Sikh, marine migrants. We will examine the implication of marine migrants including the Sun Sea and Ocean Lady. In addition, we will consider the expulsion of South Asian residents from Uganda in 1972 and the implications to Canada's refugee and resettlement policies.

## **6. October 26: Asia**

The Viet Nam "Boat People" was the largest resettlement effort of refugees in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This world event changed Canada's approach to refugee migration significantly and we will review it in detail. In addition, we will consider the more recent plight of the Rohingya.

## **7. November 2: Times for Legislative Changes**

World events, Supreme Court decisions and the ratification of the UN Protocol necessitated various legislative reforms. We will examine the implications of these changes including the 1976 Immigration Act, the Singh case 1984, the 1989 Immigration Act, the Balanced Refugee Reform Act and Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act 2012.

## **8. November 9: Africa**

Independence movements, civil war and Apartheid have caused significant persecution of ethnic groups in Africa and the resulting migration of millions of people seeking sanctuary. We will review how these events affect refugee migration to Canada including Algeria, Somalia, the Sudan and South Africa.

## **9. November 16: The Middle East**

The Middle East represents one of the most conflicted areas of the world and has increasingly become a prime source region for refugees seeking asylum. We will consider various refugee resettlements including the SS St. Louis and Post World War II Jewish refugees, Palestine, Iran and the fall of the Shah, Syria and the Yatzidi.

## **10. November 23: Where do we go from here?**

In our final lecture, we will look at Canada's refugee determination system and its policies in comparison to other G8 nations. Should refugee law be broadened to include the notion of environmental refugees? We'll review Canada's annual Immigration Plan and refugee migration trends.