

Doctors Across Borders: Refugee Physicians and Scientists in History

Wednesdays, September 6 –October 11, 2023, 5 PM–6 PM on Zoom

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Course Description:

This course will primarily focus on the experiences of refugee physicians and scientists in the 20th century, with key examples from earlier historical and contemporary events. We will examine the practical and ideological implications of the (trans)portability of scientific and medical knowledge—not only for the individuals impacted but also for the countries they left behind and to which they immigrated. While their arrival and continued presence were often perceived as a burden, refugee physicians and scientists undoubtedly enriched the biomedical communities they joined. Through their histories, we will discuss how medicine and science are never independent of political and cultural contexts. Questions of expertise and licensure are a recurring theme in these stories, offering insight into the roles that professional and government organizations play(ed) in policing the boundaries of science and medicine.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Understand circumstances under which physicians and scientists were forced to leave their country of origin.
2. Appreciate how medical and scientific expertise can be perceived as both a threat and an asset in the countries to which they immigrated.
3. Identify the challenges faced—both in the past and in the present—by refugees and the organizations and institutions that helped them acclimate.

Schedule of Topics and Selected Readings (subject to revision):

Week 1: Introduction (Sept. 6, 2023)

Reading: JAMA Editorial (1938) and Correspondence (1939), “The Problem of the Refugee Physician”

Week 2: Reasons to Leave (September 13)

Readings: Selections from personal accounts; A. Grossmann, “New Women in Exile: German Women Doctors and the Emigration”

Week 3: Barriers and Opportunities (September 20)

Readings: Articles in *Medical Leaves* (1939, 1941, 1942); J. Weaver, “Pathways of Perseverance: Medical Refugee Flights to Australia and New Zealand”

Week 4: Adaptation (September 27)

Readings: D. Fleming, “Émigré Physicians and the Biological Revolution”

Week 5: Refugee Physicians and Scientists at Cedars-Sinai (October 4)

Readings: primary sources from the Cedars-Sinai Historical Conservancy Collection

Week 6: Contemporary Displacement of Physicians and Scientists (October 11)

Readings: Articles from *The New York Times* (2019, 2023)