



IR/PO/SO 347 BORDERS, WALLS & SECURITY IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

IES Abroad Berlin

DESCRIPTION:

The course takes a comparative approach to examining how building walls is used as a political strategy to address both external and internal security challenges. Although the common discourse on globalization dismisses borders as increasingly irrelevant to the human experience, the Western world is erecting new borders, both material and immaterial (e.g., challenges to the Schengen system in Europe, the Dublin Convention, and the forced eviction of migrants/refugees), essentially aiming to control and prevent the flow of people across borders. The variability of borders will be interpreted through an overview of the contemporary theoretical analysis of borders/borderlands, elaborating on their complexity as spaces/lines, natural/constructed features, porous/fixed territorial definitions. Through the analysis of historical and recent wall/border construction cases, the course seeks to comparatively highlight the global dimension of this response to a variety of security challenges. Attention will be dedicated to the encounter/clash between local communities and the process of imposing walls: borders create political, social, and cultural distinctions, but simultaneously imply the existence of networks across them, transnational movement of protest, and the construction/reconstruction of group identities. The focus of the course revolves around people's agency at the border/wall and concentrates on how the more recent erection of walls has a strong connection to the control of migration and people flows. (This course was previously taught as "The Wall: Borders, Violence & Separation")

CREDITS: 3 credits

CONTACT HOURS: 45 hours

LANGUAGE OF INSTRUCTION: English

PREREQUISITES: None

METHOD OF PRESENTATION: Lectures, seminar discussions, use of multimedia resources, course-related excursions, Moodle.

Class discussion: The majority of each class will consist of discussions of key themes. Students will be provided with the texts to read for each class on Moodle. Each class will be structured around a separate topic, which will be addressed with the help of one or more texts posted on Moodle beforehand. Students will be expected to prepare for class by reading and reflecting upon the assigned texts and to participate in class discussions, showing that they have understood and critically evaluated the authors' arguments. Students are expected to come prepared with personal notes on the readings.

Course-related trips: There will be three in-class field studies. The first will be a visit to the Documentation Centre for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation. The second will consist of a visit to Sea-Watch (a German NGO devoted to search and rescue at Sea). The third will be a visit to the Signal Intelligence base at Teufelsberg.

Lectures: The professor will supplement class discussions with lectures to help the students interpret the material provided in the class readings, to tie the readings together, and provide summaries of theoretical approaches to the subject.

REQUIRED WORK AND FORM OF ASSESSMENT:

- Class participation - 10%
- Group project and presentation – 15%
- Midterm exam – 25%
- Research paper – 20%
- Final exam – 30%



Group project and presentation

Students will be divided into small groups and shall propose a personal interpretation of the general topic of the course through the active production of a “contested wall” idea. Video, photos, interviews and/or other expressive methods can be used. If students want to include an interview in their projects, an informed consent must be obtained from all human subjects involved, unless a waiver of consent has been approved by the IES Institutional Review Board (IRB). More information can be provided by the instructor and the IES Berlin academic staff. The projects will be presented in class during week 12.

Midterm exam

Response Paper on the readings and the topics analyzed in sessions 1-10 class.

Research paper

Students will submit a 2000-word research paper on one of the topics analyzed in class. The paper is due at the end of week 9.

Final exam

Response Paper on the readings and the topics analyzed in sessions 11-20 in class.

Participation

Grading rubric for student participation.

A	Excellent participation The student's contributions reflect an active reading of the assigned bibliography. Skillfully synthesizes the main ideas of the readings and raises questions about the applications and implications of the material. Demonstrates, through questions and comments, that he or she has been capable of relating the main ideas in the readings to the other information discussed in the course, and with his or her own life experience. The student makes informed judgments about the readings and other ideas discussed in class, providing evidence and reasons. He/she respectfully states his/her reactions about other classmates' opinions, and is capable of contributing to the inquiry spiral with other questions. The student gets fully involved in the completion of the class activities.
B	Very good participation The student's contributions show that the assigned materials are usually read. Most of the time the main ideas are identified, even though sometimes it seems that applications and implications of the information read were not properly reflected upon. The student is able to construct over others' contributions, but sometimes seems to interrupt the shared construction to go over tangents. He/she is respectful of others' ideas. Regularly involved in the activities but occasionally loses concentration or energy.
C	Regular participation The participant evidences a regular reading of the bibliography, but in a superficial way. He/she tries to construct over others' ideas, but commonly provides comments that indicate lack of preparation about the material. Frequently, contributions are shallow or unarticulated with the discussion in hand.
F	Insufficient participation Consistently, the participant reads in a shallow way or does not read at all. Does not participate in an informed way, and shows lack of interest in constructing over others' ideas.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Analyze the complexity of borders/borderlands construction and interpretation
- Interpret the cogent political aspect in the process of wall building
- Interpret the global dimension of the political discourse on securitization

- Identify and compare different wall building processes
- Understand the global dimension of human flows and human interaction with borders/walls
- Discover diverse/divisive narratives about walls and borders
- Interpret the importance of walls/borders in shaping group identities
- Discuss walls de-construction strategies

ATTENDANCE POLICY

For our up-to-date attendance and exam policy, see: <https://moodle.iesabroad.org/mod/page/view.php?id=1004317>.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students are expected to abide by the IES Abroad Academic Integrity Code. Assigned papers need to be properly and amply footnoted where appropriate, with all sources attributed, including images. Suspicious papers may be checked with plagiarism-detecting software.

CONTENT:

Session	Content	Assignments & Reading
Week 1 Session 1-2	Introduction • Section 1: Presentation: themes, problems, challenges • Section 2: Historical overview of wall construction in the Western World: the Roman Walls and the concept of limes and vallum	Readings: • R. Jones (2016): Violent borders: Refugees and the right to move. Verso Books, pp. 10-26 • B. Isaac (1998): The meaning of the terms Limes and Limitanei, in "The Journal of Roman Studies", Vol. 78, pp. 125-147 • D. Bigo (2010): Freedom and speed in enlarged borderzones. In: Vicki Squire (ed.): The contested politics of mobility. Borderzones and irregularity, pp. 1–25.
Week 2 Session 3-4	Border/Borderland and Identity Construction Processes • Section 1: What is a border/borderland? • Section 2: Definitions and critical analysis of the concepts of space/territory/sovereignty	Readings: • P. Novak (2011): The Flexible Territoriality of Borders, in "Geopolitics", 16, pp. 741-767 • A. Diener and J. Hagen (2012): Borders: A very short introduction. Oxford University Press, pp. 1-18
Week 3 Session 5-6	The Berlin Wall and the history of political walls in practice • Section 1: The Berlin Wall and its importance in the contemporary conceptualization of walls • Section 2: Violence, refugees and insecurity at the border/wall	Readings: • P. Major (2010): Behind the Berlin Wall, Oxford University Press, Introduction, pp. 1-20 • L. Lucassen (2018): Peeling an onion: the "refugee crisis" from a historical perspective." Ethnic and Racial Studies 41.3, pp. 383-410

Week 4 Session 7-8	<u>Course-related trip:</u> Visit to the Documentation Centre for Displacement, Expulsion, Reconciliation.	
Week 5 Session 9-10	EU Borders - Section 1: The Mediterranean Sea as a border/bridge in its historical dimension - Section 2: Border management and migrant fatalities in the Mediterranean	Readings: I. Fontana (2022): The human (in)security trap: how European border(ing) practices condemn migrants to vulnerability. <i>Int Polit</i> 59, pp. 465–484 J. Sachseder, S. Stachowitsch & M. Standke-Erdmann (2024): Entangled Vulnerabilities: Gendered and Racialised Bodies and Borders in EU External Border Security, <i>Geopolitics</i>, pp. 1-29
Week 6 Midterms	Midterm Exam	
Week 7 Session 11-12	EU Internal Walls - Section 1: Italy and the crisis of Schengen regime - Section 2: The Spanish/Gibraltar border	Readings: S. Casella Colombeau (2015): Policing the Internal Schengen Borders, in “Policing and Society”, pp. 480-493 S. Pack (2019): The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland. Stanford University Press, pp. 21-40
Week 8 Session 13-14	<u>Course-related trip:</u> Visit to Sea-Watch (a German NGO devoted to search and rescue at Sea)	
Week 9 Session 15-16	North America and the Wall - Section 1: The US/Mexico Wall - Section 2: The historical process of bordering and re-bordering the US	Readings: J. McC. Heyman (2008): Constructing a Virtual Wall. Race and Citizenship in the US-Mexico Border, in “<i>Journal of the South-West</i>”, 50:3, pp. 305-333 K. Korte (2023): “So, if you ask whether fences work: They work”—the role of border fortifications for migration control and access to asylum. comparing Hungary and the USA. In: <i>Comparative Migration Studies</i>, 11(1), pp. 1-19

Week 10 Session 17-18	Resistance at the Wall - Section 1: violence and resistance, contesting the wall - Section 2: Challenging walls: experience of resistance	Readings: C. Hawthorne & J.L. Kelly (2020): Borderland Regimes and Resistance in Global Perspective, in <i>Critical Ethnic Studies</i>, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020, pp. 1-16 P. Pallister-Wilkins (2009): Radical Ground: Israeli and Palestinian Activists and Joint Protest Against the Wall, <i>Social Movement Studies</i>, 8:4, pp. 393-407
Week 11 Session 19-20	Course-related trip: to the Signal Intelligence base at Teufelsberg, Berlin. Meeting point: S station "Grunewald" at 4.15 pm	Research paper due
Week 12 Session 21-22	Presentations of Group Projects and General Review	
Week 13 Final Exam		

REQUIRED READINGS:

- Bigo, D. Freedom and speed in enlarged border zones. In: Vicki Squire (ed.): The contested politics of mobility. Borderzones and irregularity, 2016: 31–50.
- Casella Colombeau S. Policing the Internal Schengen Borders, in "Policing and Society", 2015: 1-14.
- Diener, A. & Hagen, J. Borders: A very short introduction. Oxford University Press, 2012: 1-18.
- Ferrer-Gallardo, X. & Albet-Mas., A. EU-Limboscapes: Ceuta and the proliferation of migrant detention spaces across the European Union, in *European Urban and Regional Studies* 23.3, 2016: 527-530.
- Fontana, I. The human (in)security trap: how European border(ing) practices condemn migrants to vulnerability. *Int Polit* 59, 2022: 465–484.
- Hawthorne, C. & Kelly, J.L., Borderland Regimes and Resistance in Global Perspective, in *Critical Ethnic Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2020: 1-16.
- Isaac, B. The meaning of the terms Limes and Limitanei, in "The Journal of Roman Studies", Vol. 78, 1998: 125-147.
- Jones, R. Violent borders: Refugees and the right to move. Verso Books, 2016, 10-26.
- Korte, K. (2023). "So, if you ask whether fences work: They work" —the role of border fortifications for migration control and access to asylum. comparing Hungary and the USA. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 11(1), 1-19.
- Lucassen, L. "Peeling an onion: the "refugee crisis" from a historical perspective." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 41.3 (2018): 383-410.
- Major, P. Behind the Berlin Wall, Oxford University Press, Introduction, 2010: 1-20.
- McC. Heyman, J. Constructing a Virtual Wall. Race and Citizenship in the US-Mexico Border, in "Journal of the South-West", 50:3, 2008: 305-333.
- Mitchell, K., Jones, R., & Fluri, J.L. "Introduction to the Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration." Handbook on Critical Geographies of Migration. Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019.
- Novak, P. The Flexible Territoriality of Borders, in "Geopolitics", 10, 2011: 741-767.

- Pack, S. *The Deepest Border: The Strait of Gibraltar and the Making of the Modern Hispano-African Borderland*. Stanford University Press, 2019, 21-40.
- Pallister-Wilkins, P. *Radical Ground: Israeli and Palestinian Activists and Joint Protest Against the Wall*, *Social Movement Studies*, 8:4, 2009, 393-407.
- J. Sachseder, S. Stachowitsch & M. Standke-Erdmann (2024) *Entangled Vulnerabilities: Gendered and Racialised Bodies and Borders in EU External Border Security*, *Geopolitics*, 2024, 1-29.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

- Amhilat Szary L. Walls and border art: the politics of art display, in *"The Journal of Borderland Studies"*, 2012, 27 (2), pp. 213-228.
- Donnan H. and T.W. Wilson (eds), *Borders. Frontiers of Identity, Nation and the State*, Oxford, Berg, 1999 (Introduction)
- Gaibazzi P, Dunwald S and Bellagamba A (eds), *EurAfrican Borders and Migration Management. Political cultures, contested spaces and ordinary lives*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017
- Jones R. *Border Walls: security and the war on terror in the United States, Israel and India*, London, Zed Books, 2012
- Korf B and Raeymaekers T (eds), *Violence on the Margins. State, Conflicts and Borderlands*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013
- Longo M. *The politics of borders: Sovereignty, security, and the citizen after 9/11*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Vaughan-Williams N. *Europe's Border Crisis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015
- Vila P. *Narrative Identities: the Employment of the Mexican on the US-Mexican Border*, in *"The Sociological Quarterly"*, 38:1 /1997), pp. 147-180

RECOMMENDED FILM VIEWINGS:

- "Le fils de l'autre" (The son of the other), 2012, by Lorraine Lévy
- "Les sauteurs" ("Those who jump"), 2016
- "Mare Chiuso", 2012, by Stefano Liberti and Andrea Segre

(11/2025)