

TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND PEACEBUILDING IN PRACTICE

COURSE INFORMATION AND SYLLABUS

Course Number: LAW 538

Times: Tuesdays (seminar) & Thursdays (team work) 10:55 a.m. – 12:20 p.m. | **Room:** 4046

Prof. Mara Revkin, Associate Professor of Law and Political Science

Office Hours: Wednesdays 3-5 p.m. & Thursdays 3-5 p.m. by appointment via [Calendly](#)

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

This new 3-credit experiential course, “Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding in Practice,” combines the substance of Prof. Revkin’s previous 2-credit seminar on [Transitional Justice](#) (2022, 2023) with the experiential component of her course on [Evidence-Based Humanitarian Aid](#) (2024-2025), which enabled students to work collaboratively in small teams on real-world transitional justice and peacebuilding projects through a unique partnership between Duke University and the International Organization for Migration (IOM, the UN’s Migration Agency). The course will integrate doctrinal and theoretical readings and discussions with supervised project-based learning. All students will participate in a weekly 2-hour seminar discussion based on assigned readings that will provide an introduction to the field of transitional justice, its primary mechanisms (trials, truth commissions, reparations, institutional reforms, and memorialization), relevant legal frameworks (particularly international human rights law and international criminal law), and important debates. Some of this seminar time will be reserved for student teams to present and receive feedback on their work-in-progress and any challenges or obstacles they may encounter, and for discussions with guest speakers whose work we will read.

The second weekly meeting block will be dedicated to small-group work by the project teams including virtual meetings with IOM partners and feedback from peers and the instructor on drafts. The course is designed with several pedagogical objectives in mind. First, it offers students a rare and valuable opportunity to contribute to real-world projects for a major UN agency at a time when summer and post-graduate job opportunities in the international aid and development sector are increasingly limited. Second, the course is designed to strengthen practical skills that are essential for success in legal and policy careers, including collaborative research and writing, editing, and the ability to give and receive constructive feedback on complex, multi-authored documents.

Background on Duke-IOM Partnership

[IOM](#), currently led by Duke Law alumna Amy Pope ’01, was [founded](#) after World War II to resettle more than 11 million people displaced by the war in Europe. The organization now operates in 175 countries with a budget of \$2-3 billion annually for humanitarian and development programming in support of “humane and orderly migration.” IOM’s programming spans the entire migration cycle from emergency response to conflict- and climate-driven displacement to long-term support for sustainable peace, development, and good governance.

Since 2022, Prof. Revkin has been leading a research partnership [between Duke and IOM's South Sudan mission](#) that grew out of her previous professional work with IOM and other UN agencies in Iraq and Syria between 2017 and 2021. Based on the success of an initial pilot project with [a Bass Connections team of 18 Duke students](#) who conduct original research and developed evidence-based recommendations for IOM's humanitarian and peacebuilding mission in South Sudan, IOM proposed an expansion of our partnership to cover additional collaboration in support of IOM's work on transitional justice and peacebuilding in conflict-affected and fragile states. IOM's partnership with Duke is one of the first steps in a broader IOM initiative to build a pro bono program that will match law schools and law firms with IOM offices that have needs for legal research support for justice-related projects particularly in the areas of transitional justice, housing, land and property rights for displaced populations, and navigating local legal frameworks that govern international humanitarian operations and aid.

Course Content, Procedures, and Writing Assignments

Students will work in teams of between three and five students under Prof. Revkin's supervision and in close collaboration with IOM partners on written deliverables that may take the form of research reports, memoranda on legal questions, or white papers with guidelines or policy recommendations. In consultation with IOM, we have identified the following research questions and potential written deliverables in Mexico, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia. During the first two weeks of the semester, students will choose a country-project team (2-4 students per country) and will work together and with IOM partners to refine the initial list of research questions below and define realistic goals for written deliverables that can be completed by the end of the semester. Options include memos on specific legal questions, research reports describing relevant legal frameworks or patterns of rights violations, know-your-rights or other knowledge products aimed at public education and awareness-raising, or a white paper or other policy-style report with programmatic and policy recommendations for national governments, IOM and other UN agencies, and donors. Goal-setting and expectation-management are important professional skills for any partnership or lawyer-client relationship, and we will work with IOM partners to agree on written deliverables and roles and responsibilities over the course of the semester.

Grading

Grading for this 3-credit course will be conducted in accordance with the Law School's mandatory median and will evaluate both individual and team performance as follows:

- 60% for each student's individual written contribution to the team's final deliverable;
- 20% for each student's contributions to the team's collective work product including partner communications, responsiveness to feedback, collaboration in editing and integrating different sections, and the team's final ~2-page handover memo;
- 20% for attendance and participation in seminar discussions based on assigned readings.

To ensure fairness in grading and to enable every student to come away from the class with a professional writing sample, each team project will be structured to in a way that clearly delineates contributions—for example, a student might author one chapter within a multi-chapter report or one standalone memorandum in a series of memos produced by the team.

Guidance on Final Handover Memo

Due Last Day of Exam Period (May 1) with Final Draft Deliverables:

- 1 memo per team
- To be shared only with Prof. Revkin and future teams, not IOM
- Think of this as a “how-to” guide for next team of students
- 1-2 pages, 12-point font, double-spaced
- Suggested organization with brief 1-paragraph sections on the following (but teams are free to revise and adapt based on what is most relevant for your project):
 1. **Brief description and purpose of deliverable** (please briefly explain any narrowing or change in scope from IOM’s original project descriptions)
 2. **The team’s working relationship with IOM** including approximate frequency of meetings or emails updates & list of key IOM personnel and any notes on their roles (e.g., who is most responsive to email and requests for feedback)
 3. **Any challenges or context** the next team should be aware of, and feel free to include any comments on the process of narrowing scope and defining answerable research questions
 4. **List of materials in handover folder for next team:** To be shared with Prof. Revkin (not IOM) as a link or zip file and should include:
 - team meeting notes (you do not need to share or clean up all notes, but the more you are comfortable sharing, the better)
 - earlier drafts and any feedback from IOM (please save key IOM emails in the handover folder)
 - background research materials (e.g., academic articles or primary source documents such as constitutions, laws, and policies)

Written Agreement with IOM

Students will be asked to sign an agreement committing to confidentiality, academic integrity, and other professional responsibilities to our IOM partners within the framework of the institutional memorandum of understanding between Duke and the International Organization for Migration.

ChatGPT and Other AI Tools: We will develop an AI policy in consultation with IOM to govern our work, which will be incorporated into the agreement above. The agreement will clearly specify permissible and prohibited uses of AI. Until this agreement is formalized, you may use AI for translation of primary sources, editing and formatting, and you may experiment with AI as a search engine and to summarize or extract relevant information from long documents, but you may not share any written work product with me or IOM until you and your team have personally verified its accuracy with appropriate sources. You must also provide a brief but transparent explanation of any AI use and the steps you have taken to verify the accuracy of your written work products.

Laptop Policy: Laptops are permitted in class, but please try to remain present and focused on our discussions and calls with partners.

No SRWP or Travel Currently Anticipated, but Prof. Revkin will be happy to discuss supervision of potential SRWPs or other research projects building on this class in future

semesters, and students interested in building on our work with IOM to develop a publishable scholarly paper (whether solo-authored or coauthored with other team members) will be encouraged to apply for a [Summer Scholarship Grant](#), which could be used to support travel to Mexico, Sri Lanka, or Ethiopia conditional on approval from the Law School and Duke's Travel Office.

II. Draft Syllabus

WEEK 1, JANUARY 8

Introduction to “Transitional Justice”

Assignment:

- Mara Revkin, Ala Alrababah & Rachel Myrick, [Evidence-Based Transitional Justice: Incorporating Public Opinion Into the Field, with New Data from Iraq and Ukraine](#), 133 YALE L.J. 1586-1610 (2024) (Introduction and Part I)
- Read the syllabus and particularly the descriptions of the IOM projects in Sri Lanka, Mexico, and Ethiopia at pp. 2-5 and copied below. I will provide more background on the projects and you will be asked to submit your ranked preferences among these projects by Jan. 16.
- Please take a few minutes to explore the following IOM webpages:
 - IOM History: <https://www.iom.int/iom-history>
 - IOM Sri Lanka: <https://srilanka.iom.int/>
 - IOM Mexico: <https://mexico.iom.int/en>
 - IOM Ethiopia: <https://ethiopia.iom.int/>

WEEK 2, JANUARY 13 & 15

Overview of Projects in Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka to Inform Project Selection

For next week, please read **at least one item for each of the three countries** from the list below and/or the longer list of background readings on Canvas. A common challenge for lawyers is to rapidly absorb and extract the most relevant information from a potentially endless amount of reading and data on a new and complex case. Try to practice the skills of reading strategically and selectively, and you are free to start to focus your reading on the case (or cases) that emerge as most interesting to you as we prefer to submit our ranked preferences for projects by next Friday, Jan. 16.

On Tuesday, Jan. 13, I will give a short 10-minute mini-lecture / briefing on each of the countries in the alphabetical order listed below followed by group discussion of questions and ideas for approaching each of the four projects (see descriptions in syllabus above and posted as a separate document to Canvas).

Reminder: I will have calls with IOM Sri Lanka at 7 a.m. on Monday (Jan. 12) and with IOM Mexico at 10 a.m. on Monday (Jan. 12). These calls are optional but all are invited, please let me know if you would like to join.

Save-the-Date: All are invited to attend any sessions of interest at an academic-policy workshop on Transitional Justice that I am hosting at Duke on Jan. 23-24 including the informal reception at my house on Thursday, Jan. 22 (5:30-7:30). Participants include Amb. (Ret.) Beth Van Schaack, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for Global Criminal Justice (2022-2025). The draft program and participant list are posted on Canvas.

Assignment:

- **Ethiopia:**
 - **News:** Center for Preventive Action, [Conflict in Ethiopia](#), COUNCIL OF FOREIGN RELATIONS (Mar. 20, 2025).
 - **Recent IOM Work (Long and Optional):** IOM Ethiopia, [Ethiopia: Data for Sustainable Support to Persons Displaced by Conflict and Disasters and their Host Communities. Household Level Survey \(HLS\), Selected Woredas in Tigray Region](#) (April - May 2025).
 - **Policy (Long and Optional):** United Kingdom Foreign Office, [Country Policy and Information Note: Tigrayans and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front, Ethiopia](#) (Sept. 25, 2025).
 - **Academic (Optional):** Abraha Weldu Hailemariam, [From rästi to čaguraf-gosäs and Vice-versa: Revisiting the Dynamics of Land Tenure Systems and Security in Enderta, Tigray](#), 33 ANNALES D'ÉTHIOPIE 303-316 (2020).
- **Mexico:**
 - **News:** Alexandra Crail, Valente Rosas, Diego Prado, [Defending the Land, a Crime in Mexico](#), PALABRA (Apr. 9, 2025) (describing government's taking of land from indigenous peoples for development of industrial parks in the Interoceanic Corridor)
 - **Recent IOM Work (Long & Optional):** Carlos Yescas Angeles Trujano, [Indigenous Routes: A Framework for Understanding Indigenous Migration, International Organization for Migration](#) (2008)(an example of a long-form IOM research report, see the insightful description at pp. 3-4 of inequalities between indigenous and non-indigenous Mexican migrant farm workers with an example of five Zapotec migrants from Oaxaca).
 - **Academic (Optional):** Yanna Yannakakis, [Interpreting the History of Native Custom in Oaxaca, Mexico](#), 70 Ethnohistory 135-152 (2023).
- **Sri Lanka:**
 - **News:** Tamil Guardian, [Over 240 Civil Society Groups Call for Immediate Repeal of Sri Lanka's Prevention of Terrorism Act](#) (May 29, 2025).
 - **Recent IOM Work:** IOM Sri Lanka, [Cyclone Ditwah Situation Report](#) (Dec. 2025).
 - **Academic:** Roshni Kapur, [Transitional Justice Interventions in Sri Lanka: Why Do They Keep Failing?](#), 24 CONFLICT, SECURITY & DEVELOPMENT 251-275 (2024).

WEEK 3, JANUARY 20 & 22

The Political Economy of Transitional Justice and Peacebuilding

Seminar Reading:

- Strohmeier, Hannah, Unni Karunakara & Catherine Panter-Brick, *Public Discourse Narratives: From ‘Secret Aid Worker’ Discontent to Shifting Power in Humanitarian Systems*, 49 DISASTERS 1-20 (2025) (a qualitative analysis of anonymous aid worker testimonies published by THE GUARDIAN between 2015 and 2018)
 - FYI: Links to the collection of 74 essays here: <https://www.theguardian.com/profile/secret-aid-worker>.
- Axel Dreher, Valentin Lang & Bernhard Reinsberg, *Aid Effectiveness and Donor Motives*, 176 WORLD DEVELOPMENT 1-20 (2024).

Project Development: Work Plans

- Please read IOM Sri Lanka’s first draft of a suggested work plan on Canvas here. During the second half of class, we will break into our chosen teams to work on adapting the project descriptions into work plans with a list of preliminary deliverables and a rough schedule for outlines, first drafts, and final drafts.

Skim / FYI:

- Please browse these examples of different types of IOM knowledge products on Canvas as you have time: [“IOM Style Guides & Examples of IOM Knowledge Products.”](#)

Optional Transitional Justice Workshop and Reception: Jan. 22-24

- Jan. 22, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Reception at Prof. Revkin’s house (2804 Chelsea Cir., Durham)
- Jan. 23-24 Transitional Justice Workshop (Program and Participant List on Canvas)

WEEK 4, JANUARY 27 & 29

Transitional Justice Workshop + Project Development and Goal-Setting

- No assigned reading for this week to free up time for participation in the Jan. 22-24 workshop
- Jan. 27 working session: team updates and challenges for narrowing scope of projects

WEEK 5, FEBRUARY 3 & 5

IOM’s Work on Land, Property Rights, and Reparations

For next week, please continue to work with your teams on clarifying and narrowing research questions and proposed deliverables for IOM. This will require making some proactive suggestions to IOM on what we can feasibly deliver by ~ May 1 (end of exam period).

For our seminar discussion on Tuesday, Feb. 3, we will start with updates from each team. IOM Sri Lanka has asked the team to pivot from initial project on land disputes to a second project on reparations in response to changing donor and host-government priorities. To support the Sri Lanka team's rapid adjustment and our understanding of IOM's work on reparations—which is a subfield of IOM's broader work on [Housing, Land, and Property \(HLP\)](#)—please read this very short overview:

- [IOM in Land and Property Rights and Victim Reparations](#), INT'L ORG. MIGRATION 1-2 (2012).

After team updates, I will give a brief overview of different types of reparations (material, symbolic, individual, and collective) drawing on the following optional readings, and will then facilitate a group discussion of tradeoffs between individual and collective reparations.

Optional:

- Kristine Beckerle & Ali Jameel, *The Urgency of Reparations for Civilians in Yemen*, Just Sec. (Jul. 13, 2022), <https://www.justsecurity.org/82270/the-urgency-of-reparations-for-civilians-in-yemen/> (an example of an individual reparations program that distributed payments to victims, but suffered from procedural flaws that undermined its legitimacy and generated new grievances).
- Jemima García-Godos, [Reparations](#), in AN INTRODUCTION TO TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE 193-210 (2020).
- Peter J. Dixon, [The Role of Reparations in the Transition from Violence to Peace](#), in OXFORD RESEARCH ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICS 1-27 (2017).

WEEK 6, FEBRUARY 10 & 12

Legal Pluralism, Customary Law & Federalism in Peacebuilding & Transitional Justice

Seminar Reading and Discussion:

- Teams to provide brief updates on progress and any challenges for group discussion
- Prof. Revkin will give an overview of key concepts and debates about **legal pluralism** (the coexistence of two or more distinct legal systems within a single geographical area), **customary law**, and **federalism** in peacebuilding and transitional justice processes. Please think about the relevance of these three related concepts for your projects. The Mexico and Ethiopia projects deal with all three, and the Sri Lanka project deals with federalism and legal pluralism.
- Please read this very short section including the footnotes: “7. Customary, Religious, Traditional, and Other Community-Based Justice” in **Mara R. Revkin**, Ala Alrababah & Rachel Myrick, [Evidence-Based Transitional Justice: Incorporating Public Opinion into](#)

[*the Field, with New Data from Iraq and Ukraine*](#), 133 YALE LAW JOURNAL 1607-1609 (2024).

- **Optional:** Will Kymlicka, [*Transitional Justice, Federalism and the Accommodation of Minority Nationalism*](#), INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE 1-4 (2009) (a short summary of this longer article: Will Kymlicka, [*Transitional Justice, Federalism, and the Accommodation of Minority Nationalism*](#), in IDENTITIES IN TRANSITION: CHALLENGES FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES 303-333 (2011, ed. Paige Arthur).

Project Development: Outlines

- Teams should aim to send preliminary outlines of reports to IOM partners by end of this week (Feb. 13).

WEEK 7, FEBRUARY 17 & 19

Class Charter & Memory: A “Fifth Pillar” of Transitional Justice?

Seminar Reading and Discussion:

- Teams to provide brief updates on progress and any challenges for group discussion
- Please read the attached **draft “class charter”** and think about any feedback or additional questions you may have
- Please read these very short excerpts: “3. Truth and Reconciliation Commissions” and “8. Museums and Other Memorialization Mechanisms” in Mara R. Revkin, Ala Alrababah & Rachel Myrick, [*Evidence-Based Transitional Justice: Incorporating Public Opinion into the Field, with New Data from Iraq and Ukraine*](#), 133 YALE LAW JOURNAL 1601, 1603, 1609-1610 (2024).
- Prof. Revkin will give an overview of key concepts and debates around two related transitional justice mechanisms: **truth-seeking** and **memory** (memorialization) followed by a discussion of these two questions:
 - The UN has recognized four pillars of transitional justice: (1) truth-seeking, (2) criminal justice, (3) reparations, and (4) prevention of recurrence in its most recent (2023) official Guidance Note of the Secretary General. In a 2020 report, Fabián Salvioli (Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation & Guarantees of Non-Recurrence) **suggested that memory is a necessary “fifth pillar”**: “Without memory, the rights to truth, justice and full reparation cannot be fully realized and there can be no guarantees of non-recurrence.” **Do you agree? What are some individual rights that may conflict with a legal or policy obligation to memorialize past atrocities?**
 - Think about **some potential risks and unintended harmful consequences of museums, mandatory remembrance days, or other forms of memorialization**. We will discuss an example from the Sri Lanka project: **Is it normatively appropriate to describe members of designated terrorist groups as “victims”** in public memorials or museums about the past in cases where such individuals—who may have been perpetrators of some violations—also experienced violations

themselves? How could such an exhibit be designed to avoid violating domestic laws on material support for terrorism?

Optional Additional Background Reading:

- Fabián Salvioli (Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation & Guarantees of Non-Recurrence), [*Memorialization Processes in the Context of Serious Violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law: The Fifth Pillar of Transitional Justice*](#), U.N. Doc. A/HRC/45/45 (July 9, 2020).
- U.N. Secretary General, [*Transitional Justice: A Strategic Tool for People, Prevention and Peace: Guidance Note of the Secretary-General*](#) (2023).

WEEK 8, FEBRUARY 24 & 26

Involuntary Displacement and Barriers to Return in Mexico, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia

Assignments and Plan for Next Week:

- Please review and provide any **final feedback on the attached draft “class charter.”** I will bring copies to class next week for signature.
- Please complete this **brief and anonymous midterm course [feedback survey](#)**, which includes some important logistical questions about your preferences for final presentations to IOM on **April 9** (online or in-person in DC): <https://forms.gle/2H5QhWdfWanhN5zj9>.
- Prof. Revkin will give an **overview of involuntary displacement and barriers to return and reintegration of displaced persons**. Please read at least the short article about your country context (#1) and one of the suggested resources about IOM’s approach to returns (#2):
 - **Barriers to Return in Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka:**
 - **Ethiopia:** Maya Misikir, [*Weighed down by war and drought, Tigray struggles to get back on its feet*](#), THE NEW HUMANITARIAN (Apr. 23, 2024) (see especially the final section, “No going home.”).
 - Additional, optional: Abraham Tekle, [*Returnees in Tigray face targeted violence, humanitarian crisis: EHRC report*](#), THE REPORTER (Apr. 12, 2025) (citing this report by IOM Ethiopia, [*Unsafe and Overcrowded: The Shelter Crisis Facing Displaced Families in Tigray*](#), April 2025).
 - **Mexico:** Ricardo Treviño, [*The Limbo of Return: Why Many Migrants Consider Leaving Again*](#), TECSCIENCE (Dec. 11, 2025) (reviewing an academic study on Oaxaca estimating that 25% of its population has migrated to the United States, interviewing 124 returnees from the U.S. to Oaxaca, and finding that 65% are considering going back to the U.S. due to difficulties of social and economic reintegration.).
 - **Sri Lanka:** MR Narayan Swamy, [*Sri Lanka Placing Roadblocks on Tamil Refugees’ Return from India*](#), THE FEDERAL (Jan. 9, 2026).

- A longer read (optional): Immigration Board of Canada, *Sri Lanka: Situation and treatment by authorities of returnees ... (2022-August 2024)*, [ECOL.NET](#) (Aug. 14, 2024).
- **IOM’s Approach to Returns and Recent Policy Statements:**
 - Karina Tijomirov, [When Going Back is a Good Way Forward: What Assisted Voluntary Return Really Means](#), IOM Blog (Jun. 6, 2025).
 - Amy Pope, [Responding to Syria at a Time of Need; Statement by IOM Chief](#), IOM (Dec. 20, 2024) (noting that, “for the time being we are not promoting large-scale voluntary returns,” but IOM is facilitating “go-and-see” visits).
 - [IOM Spokesperson: Statement On Assisted Voluntary Return \(AVR\) of Migrants in the United States](#), IOM (May 12, 2025).

WEEK 9, MARCH 3 & 5

Truth-Seeking: Examples from Mexico, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia

Assignments and Plan for Next Week:

- Prof. Revkin will give an **overview of truth commissions and other truth-seeking mechanisms in transitional justice**, closely related to our previous discussion of **memory and memorialization**. Please read #1 and at least the short article about your country context (#2):
- **Feedback on outlines:** Each team should send to Prof. Revkin before next Tuesday (1) your current plan for written deliverables (whether sections of a report or individual memos) including an outline indicating which team member is writing which section, or working together as coauthors and (2) flag any questions that you need answered in order to move forward with research and drafting.
- **The UN and IOM’s Guidance on Truth-Seeking**
 - U.N. Secretary General, [Transitional Justice: A Strategic Tool for People, Prevention and Peace: Guidance Note of the Secretary-General](#) 14-15 (2023) (short section on “Truth Seeking”).
 - IOM, *IOM’s Programming in Transitional Justice: A Guidance Note* 9-10 (June, 2025) (short section on “Truth-seeking mechanisms”; please note that this is a confidential internal draft that can be cited in work products for IOM but not circulated outside of the class).
- **Truth-Seeking Initiatives in Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka:**
 - **Ethiopia:**
 - Julia Crawford, [Ethiopia Promises Transitional Justice Once Again](#), JUSTICEINFO.NET (Mar. 2, 2023) (noting that the Reconciliation Commission established in 2018 failed to achieve anything before the expiration of its three-year mandate).

- FYI for a longer ready on Ethiopia’s defunct truth commission: Moges Zewiddu Teshome, [*Confronting Past Atrocities: A Critical Analysis of the Defunct Ethiopian Reconciliation Commission*](#), 26 LAW, DEMOCRACY & DEVELOPMENT 343-363 (2022).
- **Mexico:**
 - Oscar Lopez, [*Inquiry into Mexico’s ‘dirty war’ obstructed by military and other agencies, board says*](#), THE GUARDIAN (Aug. 16, 2024).
 - FYI for more background, see [*Truth Commission Documents 25 Years of State Violence During Mexican Dirty War*](#), NATIONAL SECURITY ARCHIVE (Aug. 19, 2024).
- **Sri Lanka:**
 - Bhavani Fonseka & Naveera Perera, [*Does Sri Lanka Need a Truth and Reconciliation Commission? A Comment on the Latest Proposal & Ground Realities*](#), THE CENTER FOR POLICY ALTERNATIVES (2024) (executive summary of a longer report by CPA, a Sri Lanka-based human rights organization, raising concerns about the credibility of the latest truth commission in the context of previous failures).
 - FYI for more background, see Moira Lynch, [*“A Showpiece Gesture”: Strategic Legitimation and Commissions of Inquiry in Sri Lanka*](#), 11 ASIAN JOURNAL OF PEACEBUILDING 213-236 (2023).

SPRING BREAK!

WEEK 10, MARCH 17 & 19

Field Research, Funding, and Original Student Scholarship

Guest Speaker: Stephanie Wright (Duke Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science)

Assignments and Plan for Next Week:

- Teams to provide brief updates on progress and any challenges for group discussion
 - Where are we in research and writing?
 - Do we have any updated outlines or questions to send to IOM for feedback?
 - Are we on track to have some preliminary findings to put on slides to present for IOM on April 9? We should aim for around 10 minutes per team or 3-4 slides, and we will work on and practice presenting these over the next two weeks.
- **Special guest Stephanie Wright** (of the logistically flawless Duke field trip to Iraq in 2023), will join us at 11:10 a.m. on **Tuesday, March 17** after brief team updates to present her fascinating research on the effects of different types of constitutional recognition (cultural and territorial) on the identities of subnational groups through an original survey experiment and interviews in the Kurdistan Research of Iraq.
- **Please read and bring questions about:**

- Stephanie’s paper, “Identity, Conflict, and Recognition: Evidence from Iraq”
 - Feel free to ask Stephanie broader questions about how she came up with this very interesting and important research question, and the logistics of funding and planning field research in Iraq as a graduate student at Duke
 - More about Stephanie’s work here: <https://stephaniewright.phd/>.
- Think about the relevance of this research for issues of federalism and rights of subnational groups that you are encountering in your work on Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka

WEEK 11, MARCH 24 & 26

Effects of USAID Cuts on Mexico, Sri Lanka, and Ethiopia & Ongoing Aid Restructuring

Assignments and Plan for Next Week:

- Teams to provide brief updates on progress and any challenges for group discussion during the first 10 minutes of class on Tuesday (Mar. 24)
- Prof. Revkin will present on and facilitate a discussion about: the termination of USAID; the effects of USAID funding cuts on Ethiopia, Mexico, Sri Lanka; the Trump administration’s ongoing restructuring of foreign aid; and potential claims that could be brought under U.S. law by USAID contractors and implementing partners harmed by breaches of contracts
- **Please read and think about the following question** (Mar. 24).
 - Vibhu Mishra, [UN, US sign \\$2 billion humanitarian funding agreement for 17 crisis-hit countries](#), UN NEWS (Dec. 29, 2025).
 - After dismantling USAID, the Trump administration pledged to resume \$2 billion in humanitarian aid to 17 countries contingent on UN agencies meeting strict new accountability, efficiency, and impact evaluation requirements, with a stern warning that UN agencies must “adapt, shrink, or die.” The administration has not provided any public justification for the selection of these 17 countries out of the 66 countries that were receiving humanitarian assistance from USAID prior to its closure in 2025. USAID’s previous criteria for humanitarian aid were explicitly grounded in need as measured by indicators including levels of internal and cross-border displacement, mortality and morbidity rates, and levels of acute malnutrition.
 - **Question:** Take a look at the list of [17 countries](#), which includes Ethiopia but not Sri Lanka or Mexico. Based on what you know about these countries (or can find in a few minutes of research), what factors might explain the selection of these 17 countries from among the many more that have equal or greater humanitarian needs?
- **FYI optional background on USAID cuts to Ethiopia, Mexico, and Sri Lanka** (Prof. Revkin will present on these):
 - **Ethiopia** (prior to resumption of aid in 2026): Samuel Getachew & Fred Harter, [“We Will Just Die in Silence”: US Aid Cuts Hit Ethiopia’s Fragile Tigray Region](#), ASSOCIATED PRESS (Mar. 13, 2025).

- **Mexico:** Lizbeth Diaz, [U.N. Refugee Agency to Close Four Offices in Mexico Amid Funding Crunch](#), REUTERS (Apr. 29, 2025).
- **Sri Lanka:** Sandunlekha Ekanayake, [Aid Interrupted: Reverberations in Sri Lanka of USAID's Dismantling](#), POLITY (Jun. 24, 2025).
- **Checking in about drafts:** By end of this week (Mar. 27), Prof. Revkin would like to see at least partial drafts from all teams if not already shared in order to give preliminary feedback, and will be available to meet during the Thursday class block or other times here: <https://calendly.com/mrevkin/officehours>.
- **Save the date for final presentations to IOM DC: April 9, 11 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**
 - Hybrid and in-person in DC.
 - Each team should aim to present for around 7 minutes with 3-4 slides per team.

WEEK 12, MARCH 31 & APRIL 2

Leadership and Communication: Examples from IOM Director General Amy Pope '01

Assignments and Plan for Next Week:

- Teams to provide brief updates on progress and any challenges for group discussion during the first 10 minutes of class on Tuesday (Mar. 31)
- Logistics and preparations for April 9 hybrid presentations to IOM
 - **Optional travel to DC** with the reminder that travel was not anticipated and is not expected for this class
 - Prof. Revkin can cover train tickets, gas/tolls for driving, and 1 hotel night (April 8), please sign up here: [April 9 DC Travel Planning](#)
 - **Prof. Revkin example presentation** on tradeoffs between individual and collective reparations (3-4 slides, 7 minutes per team), template to be posted on Canvas
- Prof. Revkin will facilitate discussion of examples of leadership and communications from IOM based on these optional readings and materials:
 - **Video:** Scripps News, [UN Migrant Organization Rejects Trump's Nominee](#) (Jun. 29, 2018) (on the victory of Portugal's candidate, Antonio Vitorino, over the U.S. nominee)
 - **Video:** Associated Press, [American Defeats Boss for UN Migration Top Job](#), (May 15, 2023) (responding to a question about her campaign tactics at 00:51)
 - Colum Lynch, [The Bitter Battle for Top UN Migration Job](#), DEVEX (Apr. 27, 2023) (a pro-Pope perspective)
 - Philipp Mottaz, [EXCLUSIVE: Diplomatic Exchanges Reveal Bitter Rift Between the EU and the US About the Leadership Elections at UN Migration Agency After US Supports DG's Deputy for Top Job](#), THE GENEVA OBSERVER (Apr. 6, 2023) (an anti-Pope perspective)

- FYI an example of good policy writing: Amy Pope, [A Plan for Replacing a Broken Global System](#), FOREIGN AFFAIRS (Jan. 7, 2025) (DG Pope’s vision for “overhaul” of a “broken” global migration management system).
- Thursday, April 2: Prof. Revkin traveling but available for office hours on Zoom during class time at <https://duke.zoom.us/j/5738700314>. Additional office hours (by Zoom this week) here: <https://calendly.com/mrevkin/officehours>.

WEEK 13, APRIL 7 & APRIL 9

Preparing and Practicing Final Presentations for IOM

Assignments and Plan

- **For April 7:** Each team should prepare a first draft of a 7-minute presentation (3-4 slides) with practice presentations in class.
- **For April 9:** Final presentations to IOM from 11 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EDT.
 - Prof. Revkin will compile a single slide deck
 - Order of team presentations TBD soon by IOM based on time zones and availability of international colleagues, most likely run-of-show (draft):

Draft Schedule for April 9 Duke-IOM Presentations

IOM Address: 1707 L Street, 9th Floor, Washington DC 20036

- Do not rely on the address listed on Google Maps, which is out-of-date

Teams Link:

- **Join:** <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/32690803066672?p=pg1rROaWAcElPcAkCM>
- Meeting ID: 326 908 030 666 72
- Passcode: kL2Fq27S

Arrival: *Those attending in person should aim to arrive by 10:45 to allow time for entry into the building. Those participating by Teams should sign in a few minutes early.*

- 11:00 a.m. – 11:03 a.m.: Katie Kerr (IOM Acting Head, Global Programs Unit) & Prof. Mara Revkin (Duke): Welcome (3 min)
- 11:03 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.: Sri Lanka presentation (7 minutes)
 - 11:10 a.m. – 11:20 a.m.: Sri Lanka Q&A + Discussion (10 minutes)
- 11:20 a.m. – 11:27 a.m.: Ethiopia presentation (7 minutes)
 - 11:27 a.m. – 11:37 a.m.: Ethiopia Q&A + Discussion (10 minutes)

- 11:37 – 11:44 a.m.: Mexico presentation (7 minutes)
 - 11:44 – 11:54 a.m.: Mexico Q&A (10 minutes)
- 11:54 – 12:00 p.m.: Closing and thanks to IOM
 - Duke team available until 12:15 for additional Q&A

WEEK 14, APRIL 14

Last Class: Debriefing on IOM Presentations and Closing Discussion

Plan:

- We will spend the first part of class debriefing on the presentations to IOM and processing feedback.
 - At this stage, all substantive feedback will be passed on to next year's teams along with the final handover memos.
 - Teams may take until the end of the exam period (May 1) to finalize and submit handover memos and your draft substantive reports or memos to Prof. Revkin, but you are free to submit sooner. Prof. Revkin will do a quick review and then send to IOM partners cc'ing teams.
 - If individual team members have different preferences for submission dates, you can submit individual memos or sections of reports to Prof. Revkin as you finalize them.
- Last 10 minutes: Course evaluation administered by Ms. Marlen Iraheta