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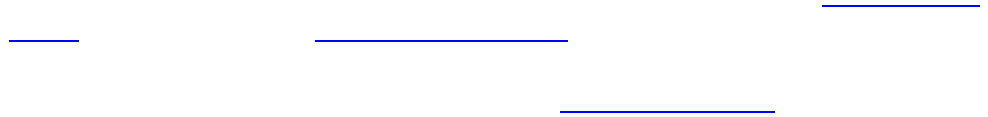


**Department of Sociology Seminar**





**Federico Varese**



**Nuffield College Sociology Seminar**

**Oxford University Chabad Society**

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**Innovative Methods for Researching Societal Inequalities'**

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**Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism**

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**Seminar Room 1, Oxford Department of International Development,  
3 Mansfield Road, Oxford, OX1 3TB**

*Seminar series convenor: Dr Jeff Crisp*

## **About the seminar**

Domestic constitutions may be the best way to protect refugees in an era when the international refugee protection system has failed so miserably. The current refugee crises in Syria and elsewhere have created the greatest number of displaced persons in history, bringing the inadequacies of the refugee system into even sharper relief. The 1951 Refugee Convention, the principle international treaty aimed at protecting asylum-seekers, does not account for the increasingly complicated reasons compelling people to leave their homelands and seek refuge elsewhere, such as ever-expanding armed conflict and the ravages of climate change.

This presentation argues for the increased utilization of an oft-ignored legal protection for refugees: constitutional asylum. The right to asylum has proliferated in national constitutions over the past two decades, a microcosm of the trend toward constitutionalized human rights law more generally. While usually nothing more than words on paper, these provisions have sometimes been used by lawyers, particularly in Latin America, to expand protections for refugees beyond the scope of the Refugee Convention. Such strategies might also provide greater protection for refugees in the Global North, particularly Europe, where nearly half of the national constitutions contain a right to asylum. The factors which have contributed to the successful utilization of constitutional asylum in Latin America are present in at least two EU Member States with broad constitutional rights to asylum: France and Italy.

Emphasizing constitutional asylum is strategically wise in an era of growing nationalism, where state actors in many countries have become increasingly critical of globalization and other manifestations of what they - and their constituents - view as international influence on domestic decision-making. In such an environment, a constitutionalized right to asylum cannot be characterized as an imposition from an international body or treaty; rather, it is part of the highest law of the land. As such, it is immune from the kind of nationalist critique that has weakened international protection for refugees.

## **About the speaker**

Professor Stephen Meili writes and teaches about the rights of non-citizens, particularly those seeking asylum. His recent publications include a comparative study of the detention of asylum-seekers in the U.S. and the U.K., (NYU Journal of International Law and Politics 2015), the right not to hold a political opinion as the basis for asylum (Columbia Human Rights Law Review, 2015) and a human rights-based analysis of U.S. refugee resettlement policy (International Journal of Migration and Border Studies 2016). He has also published extensively on cause lawyering in comparative perspective. His research has been funded by grants from the National Science Foundation and the Robina Foundation. He teaches courses on Immigration Law, Human Rights Law and Legal Practice.

Stephen has been an Academic Visitor at the Faculty of Law at Oxford University, as well as a Senior Associate Member at Oxford's St. Antony's College. He has taught classes to students at several law schools in Medellin, Colombia and at Uppsala University in Sweden.

Stephen Meili also serves as Director of the Law School's Immigration and Human Rights Clinic, where students represent asylum-seekers and detained individuals in various immigration and appellate court proceedings. Over the past few years, the IHR Clinic has obtained asylum or other forms of protection for applicants from Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Guinea, Honduras, Iran, Liberia, Syria, Sudan, Turkmenistan and Zimbabwe.

*Light refreshments will be provided after the event.*

## **Forthcoming seminars**

For details of future seminars this term, please visit the [RSC website](#).



**Resistance and Collaboration in Occupied Europe**

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**Senior Lecturer in Quantitative Social Science**

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**University College London - Institute of Cardiovascular Science, Department of Population  
Science and Experimental Medicine**

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Spreadsheets: Good practice in spreadsheet design

Spreadsheets: Good practice with charts

Spreadsheets: Good practice with lookups

Spreadsheets: Good practice with pivot tables

Spreadsheets: Turning problems into formulae

Spreadsheets: Good practice in spreadsheet design-

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publishing: Effective workflows

Desktop

