

# INTENSIVE SUMMER COURSE ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEE STUDIES IN GREECE: CREATING LEADERS FOR A DIVERSE AND COMPLEX WORLD

## CONTEXT >

### DISTRESS MIGRATION: A COMPLEX CHALLENGE

Migration is one of the central moral and governance issues of our time. Conflict, war, violence, natural disasters, and a host of other seemingly unstoppable factors have catalyzed the recent mass movement of people year after year. Over the past decade alone, more people have been forced to leave their homes than at any time since WWII. As forcibly displaced people cross international borders, they encounter a host of serious, sometimes insurmountable challenges that leave them unprotected, render them destitute, and undermine their basic sense of security and well-being. Distress migration impacts not only those fleeing but also those receiving the influx: massive influx tends to severely strain infrastructure and social support systems in host countries. Though many host communities have shown deep solidarity and offered generous support to migrants, including government-led initiatives for successful inclusion, many nations across the world continue to struggle to meet basic needs of both local and distress migrant populations, setting in motion negative and foreseeable outcomes for everyone, including those democratic and humanitarian values meant to unite us.



*"It was an incredibly rich experience. I made friends for life, I understood my family's experience of immigration and I feel more ready to fight for things to change."*

*(Course participant, 2023)*

## DESIGN >

### MISSION AND GOALS

The course is structured and designed around three main learning objectives:

- Introduce students to critical ***theoretical aspects of migration***;
- familiarize them with existing ***migration management practices*** at the local, national, regional and international level; and
- train them on applying their knowledge on ***migration crisis management and policy advocacy***.



## IMPACT >

### DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS: TRAINING FUTURE ADVOCATES

It is within this complex context that the **Harvard FXB Center for Health and Human Rights (Harvard FXB)**, the **Harvard Center for Hellenic Studies (Harvard CHS)** and the **Refugee and Migration Studies Hub of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens (NKUA)**, Greece, launched an intensive, three-week summer training in Greece in 2022. The goal was to establish a **globally impactful course to train the next generation of leading experts**.

Led by migration experts from both Harvard University and NKUA, this one of its kind training offers something which is unique: an intensive 3 week experience, where learning opportunities include not only lectures and seminars with leading migration experts trained in different disciplines, but also practical experiences including participation in a simulated rescue at sea, visits to migrant shelters and meetings with governmental leaders addressing migration challenges and members of refugee and host communities.

To fulfill its goal, the course takes place beyond the walls of academia and on the field, allowing participants to gain first-hand insight into the realities of forced migration. It takes place in Greece, a country that for centuries has stood at the crossroads of civilizations and, since 2015, has received one of the largest influx on distress migrants in Europe- no other country exemplifies both the benefits and the many challenges of large-scale contemporary migration simultaneously. The course thus provides something of global value to participants - a holistic perspective grounded in lived experience - as they embark on impactful careers.



*This summer course was truly the best experience of my life. The topics we covered about migration and refugee studies were so diverse and eye-opening, giving me valuable insights into the global issues we face. [...] It not only broadened my knowledge but also made me feel like I was part of something meaningful that can positively impact society!"*

*(Course participant, 2023)*



## At a glance

During the course's first three years:

**A total of 80 young people** from **30 nations** were trained. The origin nations of this cohort include: The US, Greece, Palestine, Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bangladesh, Nigeria, South Korea, India, Somalia, Lebanon, Turkey, the region of Kurdistan, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Brazil, Jordan, Germany, the UK, Italy, Ecuador, Canada, Poland, Philippines, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia. Participants come from a wide range of disciplines and with different backgrounds with a significant number of them having immigrant and refugee background themselves.

**135 leading scholars and experts** shared their knowledge and expertise with the participants.

**31 NGOs** hosted and interacted with the participants. Five of them allowed participants to shadow their daily activities.

**1 Harvard Global Office (CHS Greece)** supported the organization of the course and hosted a number of seminars.

**7 members of the refugee community** and **10 members of the host community** interacted with the participants.

**2 NGO Fairs** were organized, providing participants a unique opportunity for both professional networking and for receiving critical knowledge directly from those on the ground.

**3 Simulations Activities** at sea were organized, placing students at the center of a first-response team, teaching them how to set up a field scene in an emergency setting and provide care to distress migrants just rescued at sea. 50 local actors participated in these activities.

**6 visits to open and closed migrant reception facilities** were organized, allowing students to witness important aspects of migration management policies and their impact on migrants.

## Scholarships

**\$51,185** was awarded to support the attendance of **16** participants with refugee background and participants with financial needs who would not have been able to participate otherwise.

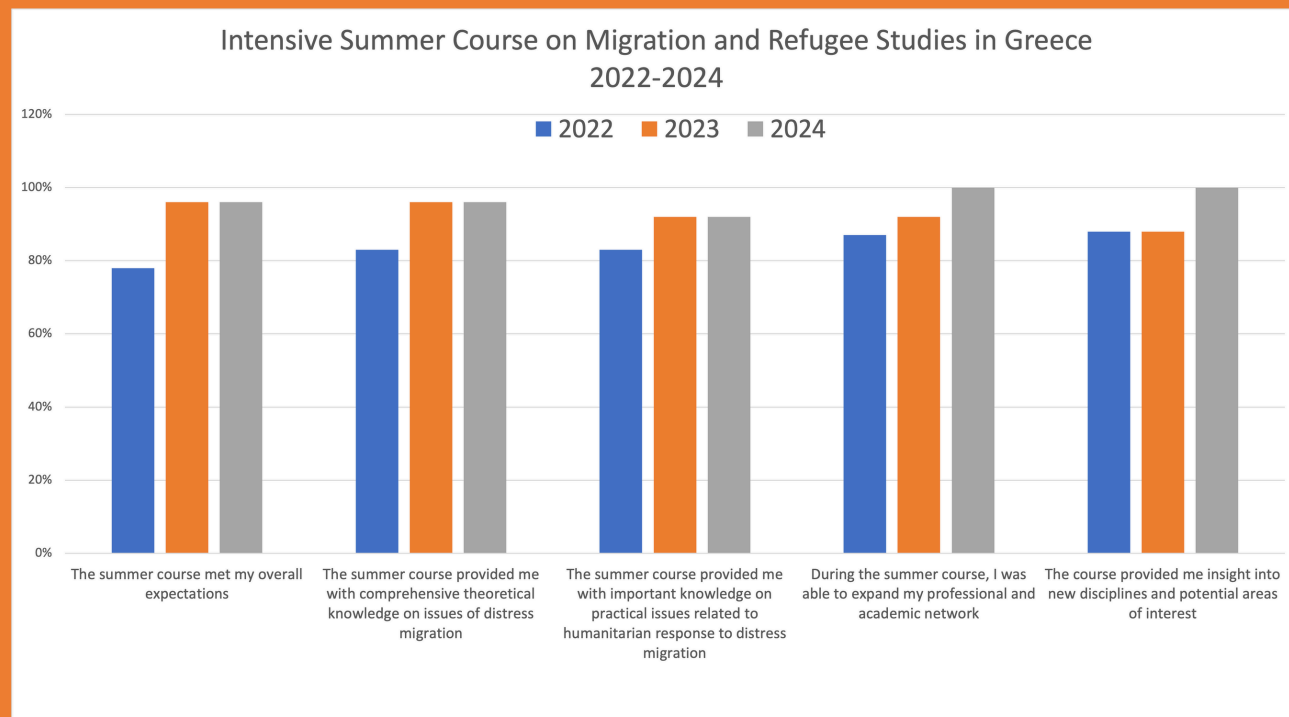




## Real-life impact

The course aims to help participants navigate the challenges they will inevitably face as theory, lived experience, expectations and field realities collide, while helping them synthesize a new understanding of migration across the world. Course graduates use the knowledge they gain and the network they establish as a launching pad for instrumental careers in the field - as humanitarian doctors, as international lawyers, as NGO leaders and as educators. Our graduates serve as advisors to governments across the world, have become leaders in the refugee advocacy and policy space, collaborate with NGOs, lead research projects and launch fundraising efforts. By equipping future professionals, the initiative creates long-lasting, positive change that ripples across the world.

## Course's success



## Testimonies

*"We covered an incredible amount of content for a short amount of time. I now feel more fluent in the space and feel like I have a better understanding that will empower me to make the most of this knowledge and be a force for change." Course participant, 2023*

*"It was an extraordinary experience to connect with the community directly impacted by migration. Their stories and perspectives brought a human touch to the complex issue of migration, making it more relatable and deeply moving. The fieldwork activities enriched the summer school experience, giving me a more comprehensive understanding of migration challenges beyond the classroom setting." Course participant, 2023*



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