

## COIL Reflection Spring 2021, POL 386: Global Migration & Refugees

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COIL aligns with my teaching philosophy and instructional goals. One of my main objectives as an instructor is to promote global awareness. In my courses, students learn how to use data, reliable information, and unbiased news sources to think critically about other countries' political systems. Many of my assignments help them identify, and learn to avoid, ethnocentrism. I have also sought to increase students' involvement in experiential learning, for example by joining the democratic erosion collaborative or by running a crowdfunding campaign in my First Year Seminar.

My spring 2021 COIL project was with a Kyrgyz colleague teaching at AlAtoo University in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. Though very productive and rewarding, the project could not include any synchronous components given the 10-hour time difference. Instead, we exchanged recorded lectures—mine was an overall introduction to migration from Kyrgyzstan to Russia. For students, the main component was an interview project. SSU students were paired with Kyrgyz students and interviewed each other on WhatsApp—using questions developed in class (some questions were about course content, others more generally about being a student, the impact of the pandemic etc.). Many students continued to exchange with their partners beyond the assignment, which was awesome to see.

Students reflected on the experience in a written assignment. Below are a few quotes from their written reflections, showing how much they learned from the assignment:

- "Overall, it was a great interactive experience that I think should be done more often between students in different countries. It broadens one's perspective on the world and eliminates media reporting. It is a useful conversation to have in order to better understand migration around the world."
- "As an immigrant myself, I understood a lot of the things Aizhama was noticing with immigration in Kyrgyzstan."
- "Exchanging emails with a student from Kyrgyzstan was an excellent opportunity to understand migration on a personal level."
- "In the U.S we often try and shape migrants as uneducated, second-class people when, in reality, anyone who can speak 6 languages is clearly well-educated."
- "I loved talking to Yasmin [...]. We had great conversations not just about migration but about our personal lives. [...] She can speak 3 languages fully, Russian, Turkish, and English, and she is also learning to speak French."
- "My cultural background is primarily Eastern Europe [...] I was curious to learn about the post-Soviet history of Kyrgyzstan, & the lasting effects of communism & ties to Russia."
- "I am aware that, as far as the "passport lottery" is concerned, I am a winner. While many Americans do not travel outside the US, it is a choice, and I have chosen every time to

take the experience. Had I been born somewhere else, that opportunity may not have been afforded to me so easily."

- "I really enjoyed this project as I did not know anything about Kyrgyzstan as a country, much less their migration culture. I liked the opportunity to talk to someone from a different country and learn things from their experience. In many ways it helped me understand migration and migration policies in the United States."