



DUKE UNC CONSORTIUM FOR MIDDLE EAST STUDIES OUTREACH PROGRAM
“Arab Refugee Crisis in the 21st Century: Conference & Workshop for Educators”
NOTES

A Few Take-Away Points:

- We are in the midst of a huge humanitarian crisis that has emerged over the past 5 years.
- There is an international responsibility to protect refugees; the 1951 Refugee Convention is insufficient.
- The mass media affects our understanding of refugees: we consistently see images of violence or victimization. It is important to remember that ‘refugee’ is not an *identity*, it is a *political status*.
- We should balance media coverage with refugees as humans living their daily lives.
- We should consider refugees as an *asset*, not a problem. Refugee populations can thrive in new communities, but need to be supported with language training and basic needs like shelter.
- Visual art and poetry are forms of expression that Syrians (and really, people everywhere) are using to cope with trauma.
- Words and language matter deeply in the communities we form: freedom of expression is important!

Additional Resources:

- Bridges of Understanding:** <https://bridgesofunderstanding.org/> Their program *YouthTalk* is a groundbreaking social studies curriculum that pairs high school classrooms in the United States with those in the Arab World. They also offer a *Bridges at School* a topical curriculum developed for American middle school classrooms providing more information about the Arab World.
- Planet Syria:** <https://www.planetsyria.org/en> Planet Syria is a campaign to engage people around the world in solidarity to stop violence and extremism.
- Syria Deeply:** <http://www.syriadeeply.org/> Designed to provide you with a complete understanding of the Syrian conflict from all angles, including all the major players, issues and drivers of the civil war. There are interactive maps on this site.
- The Syria Campaign:** <https://thesyriacampaign.org/> An independent advocacy group campaigning for a peaceful and democratic future for Syria. There are good facts and figures on this site.
- Yassin al-Haj Saleh:** <http://www.yassinhs.com/> A blog with articles and interviews on the Syrian crisis.
- Banksy Graffiti outside of French Embassy:** <http://banksy.co.uk/>
- Humans of New York interviews with Syrian Refugees:** <http://www.businessinsider.com/syrian-refugee-stories-told-by-humans-of-new-york-2015-12>
- Creative Memory:** <http://www.creativememory.org/?lang=en> Art that has come out of the Syrian revolution.
- Prince Claus Fund:** <http://www.princeclausfund.org/> Based on the idea that culture is a basic need, this fund actively seeks to support cultural collaborations founded on equality and trust in spaces where resources and opportunities for cultural expression and limited and cultural heritage is threatened.
- Syria Speaks:** <http://www.saqibooks.co.uk/book/syria-speaks/> This book showcases the work of over fifty artists and writers who are challenging the culture of violence in Syria. Their literature, poems and songs, cartoons, political posters and photographs document and interpret the momentous changes that have shifted the frame of reality so drastically in Syria.
- Art of Resilience (film):** <https://artofresiliencefilm.wordpress.com/> This is the film that was shown on Thursday evening and referenced in the “Crisis Culture” panel. I am doing research on whether or not it is possible to stream this film for free from Duke.

Recommended News Outlets:

- The Guardian:** <http://www.theguardian.com/world/middleeast>
- The BBC:** http://www.bbc.com/news/world/middle_east
- NY Times:** <http://www.nytimes.com/>
- Atlantic Council:** <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/>