



Elizabeth Cullen DUNN
PBK Speaker Topics

Public Lectures:

1) The Refugee Crisis: Why So Many People Are On the Move, and What We Can Do About It.

Today, more than 71 million people---a population larger than the population of France---are refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced people. Why are so many people displaced today, and why do the numbers keep skyrocketing? Can the UN system aid them, and what happens to the countries that host them? Most importantly, what can be done to help people start their lives again after displacement, rather than waiting in limbo? In this lecture, I will talk about the causes and effects of mass displacement, why attempts to help keep failing, and what can be done to help both displaced people and their host countries.

2) Humanitarian Aid: How to Give Help That Helps

In the wake of war or natural disaster, a huge and complex system of aid swings into action to help survivors. From government agencies such as USAID, to UN agencies such as the UN High Commission on Refugees, to private organizations such as CARE International and Doctors Without Borders, thousands of different groups descend on the site of the disaster and try to assist. Yet, despite the enormous amounts of money allocated to helping, much of the aid being given is inappropriate, unneeded, or of little use to people in desperate need. Why is it so difficult to give the right kind of aid? In this lecture, I talk about how the structure of the aid system makes it very difficult for the aid system to adapt to local contexts, and new ways aid agencies might provide help that actually helps.

Classroom Visits

1) At the Border: the US Asylum System, and Why It's Failing

The situation at the US-Mexico border has become dire. Many of the people waiting there are claiming asylum, alleging that they have a credible fear of death or incarceration if they return to their countries of origin. Asylum claims have a very particular status under US and international law. What is the US's responsibility under international law? How can a clogged asylum system be made to work again? Are the new initiatives proposed by the US government meeting international standards of protection? And what alternatives are there for dealing with the migration crisis? This presentation will talk about the asylum system, how it is defined

under the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees, and how the US Immigration and Nationality Act set up a system to judge asylum claims. I'll talk about why the 1951 Convention no longer applies well to the reasons that many people are forced to leave their countries of origin, and how the current US asylum system is not well situated to judge the validity of claims. I'll also talk about potential reforms and alternative solutions for dealing with the crisis on the southern border.

2) Europe's Refugee Crisis

The 2015-2016 refugee crisis in Europe, in which over a million people entered the EU and claimed asylum has put the very existence of the EU in jeopardy. Reaction to the influx of refugees fuelled Brexit and the rise of authoritarian populism inside the EU, has led to the rise of right-wing parties that some call neo-fascist. It has pushed Greece and Italy further into financial crisis and prompted the EU to work out unsavory deals with warlords in Libya and the neo-authoritarian government in Turkey. In this lecture, I'll talk about the challenges that the influx of refugees has posed for the EU, what effects it has had on the solidity of the union, and what political risks the ongoing arrival of refugees poses for the long-term health of the EU.