

SPECIALIST COURSE: THE POLITICS OF PRODUCING KNOWLEDGE ON MIGRATION

While the field 'migration studies' is flourishing as never before, recent debates have cast a more critical gaze at what kind of knowledge we produce, for whom, and why. Rather than delving into methodological technicalities or abstract ideological debates, this specialist course sets out to jointly examine the everyday politics of doing migration research.

The course caters to both early career and senior researchers. It takes the shape of discussion-based seminars that are structured around texts that have pushed recent debates into different directions. This includes 6 interactive, 3-hour sessions that take place once every 2 weeks. Participants are expected to attend all sessions, and to read multiple texts in advance of each session.

The course is convened by Robin Vandevordt and Rossella Marino, on behalf of CESSMIR.

Practicalities:

Timing: 6 sessions, every 2 weeks from February 16th until April 27th 2026

Location: Campus Dunant 2, Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent



Registration is free but mandatory via [this link](#)

PROGRAMME

SESSION 1 16-02-2026

Introduction: In this session we offer a brief introduction into current debates on how knowledge about migration is produced, for whom, and why. After sketching the historical forces that have created, shaped and transformed the field of 'migration studies', we delve into recent calls to take a 'reflexive turn', to 'de- and re-center' and to 'de-migrantize' our understanding of human mobility.

SESSION 2 02-03-2026

Can migration (studies) be decolonised? If so, how? What use can decolonial theories be for the study of human movement? What would it mean to decenter migration studies or to demigrantise social research? How can we avoid reproducing neocolonial power relations?

SESSION 3 16-03-2026

Doing migration studies with(out) an accent. What knowledge counts as 'valid'? Who theorises, and how does theory relate to experience? In a context where borders are increasingly turned into a 'spectacle', how can we do critical research that preserves the right to 'opacity' and avoids the reproduction of violence? More broadly, how can we design research in a politically productive way? When, how and why should we focus on agency or structure, on power or resistance, and on evidence or experience?

SESSION 4 30-03-2026

The price of impact. What does it mean to strive towards societal or political impact? What are its implications? How does striving for 'impact' relate to objectivity, methodological rigour, ethics and social justice? How can you design research to maximise 'impact' and/or to contribute to social justice?

SESSION 5 20-04-2026

Seminar by Dr. Cesar Merlin-Escorza (Radboud University): The politics of doing migration-related research

SESSION 6 27-04-2026

Doing migration research: new directions. Every participant writes a short reflection paper (ca. 3000 words) that engages with the politics of knowledge production in their own research project. This is the starting point of a collective discussion on whether and how we can do migration research differently.