

SO2H2-15 Mobility in the Digital Age

24/25

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Derya Ozkul

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies are increasingly being integrated into various aspects of our lives, including public decision-making systems. Some countries have even started incorporating these technologies into their immigration systems, using them to predict future migration and displacement, process visa applications, and conduct profiling and risk assessments for decision-making purposes. With large-scale interoperable information systems, it has become possible to deduce individual characteristics, screen them through different systems to obtain more information about an individual, and ultimately make decisions based on comparisons with others. This module aims to provide students with an introduction to the latest developments in this field and explore the conditions in which these technologies have been integrated into immigration and asylum decision-making systems, as well as humanitarian actions. Through a variety of case studies from Europe and North America, we will examine how these new technologies are reshaping state borders, identifying individuals not only through their biographic and biometric information but also by constantly comparing them to others' characteristics as part of an inferred group. Additionally, we will explore how humanitarian actors have employed them in countries in Africa and the Middle East and how migrants themselves navigate, adopt, and resist the use of these technologies.

Module aims

The module aims to provide students with an overview of the most recent developments in using new technologies for immigration and asylum decision-making, as well as humanitarian actions, and enable them to evaluate their impact on mobility from a critical perspective. Through this course, students will be able to analyse how these technologies extend bordering practices and alter the understanding of trust between states, citizens, and migrants. Additionally, the module aims to explore how the humanitarian field is adopting new technologies and examine how migrants are navigating and/or resisting them.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

MOBILITY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

- Week 1: AI and Automating Migration
- Week 2: Identification and Biometrics
- Week 3: Politics of Predicting Mobility
- Week 4: Trusted Travellers: From Passports to Credentials
- Week 5: AI in Immigration and Risk Assessments
- Week 6: Reading Week
- Week 7: AI in Asylum, Identification and Matching
- Week 8: Digital Humanitarianism
- Week 9: Mobile Phones and Mobility
- Week 10: Digital Citizenship and Surveillance

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Have the knowledge and understanding of how and to what extent the operation of borders is changing in the digital age.
- Have the knowledge and ability to critically analyse the ethical, political and social implications of the implementation of new technologies in border management, immigration and asylum application processing, as well as humanitarian actions.
- Have the knowledge and ability to analyse the ways in which migrants navigate, adopt or challenge the use of a variety of new technologies.
- Be able to describe and critically participate in political and intellectual discussions on the use of new technologies in areas related to migration, asylum and humanitarian actions.
- Address the aims and objectives of the module demonstrating close engagement with module materials

Indicative reading list

- Aas, K.F. (2006). 'The body does not lie': Identity, risk and trust in technoculture. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2(2): 143–158.
- Amoore, L. (2006). Biometric borders: Governing mobilities in the war on terror. *Political*

Geography, 25(3): 336-351.

- Amoores, L. (2014). *The Politics of Possibility: Risk and Security Beyond Probability*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Aradau, C. (2023). Borders have always been artificial: Migration, data and AI. *International Migration*, 61: 303–306.
- Aradau, C., & Blanke, T. (2017). Politics of prediction: Security and the time/space of governmentality in the age of big data. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 20(3): 373-391.
- Beduschi, A. (2021). International migration management in the age of artificial intelligence. *Migration Studies*, 9 (3): 576–596.
- Bigo, D. (2020). Interoperability: A political technology for the datafication of the field of EU internal security? In *The Routledge Handbook of Critical European Studies*, Edited By Didier Bigo, Thomas Diez, Evangelos Fanoulis, Ben Rosamond, Yannis A. Stivachtis, pp. 400-417.
- Bridle, J. (2016). Algorithmic Citizenship, Digital Statelessness. *GeoHumanities*, 2(2): 377-381.
- Browne, S. (2010). Digital Epidermalization: Race, Identity and Biometrics. *Critical Sociology*, 36(1): 131-150.
- Calzada, I. (2023). Emerging digital citizenship regimes: Pandemic, algorithmic, liquid, metropolitan, and stateless citizenships. *Citizenship Studies*, 27:2, 160-188.
- Cheesman, M. (2022). Self-Sovereignty for Refugees? The Contested Horizons of Digital Identity. *Geopolitics*, 27:1: 134-159.
- Cheney-Lippold, J. (2016). Jus Algoritmi: How the National Security Agency Remade Citizenship. *International Journal of Communication*, 10: 1721-1742.
- Gillespie, M., Osseiran, S., & Cheesman, M. (2018). Syrian Refugees and the Digital Passage to Europe: Smartphone Infrastructures and Affordances. *Social Media + Society*, 4(1): 1-12.
- Hintz, A., Dencik, L., & Wahl-Jorgensen, K. (2017). Digital Citizenship and Surveillance: Introduction. *International Journal of Communication*, 11: 731-739.
- Jacobsen, K. L. (2015). *The politics of humanitarian technology: good intentions, unintended consequences and insecurity*. New York: Routledge.
- Jacobsen, K.L., Sandvik, K.B. (2018). UNHCR and the pursuit of international protection: Accountability through technology? *Third World Quarterly*, 39(8): 1508–1524.
- Johns, F. (2023). *#Help: Digital Humanitarianism and the Remaking of International Order*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leese, M. (2016). Exploring the Security/Facilitation Nexus: Foucault at the 'Smart' Border. *Global Society*, 30:3: 412-429.
- Madianou, M. (2021). Nonhuman humanitarianism: when 'AI for good' can be harmful. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24(6): 850-868.
- Molnar, P. (2023). Digital border technologies, techno-racism and logics of exclusion. *International Migration*, 61: 307–312.
- Muller, B.J. (2010). Unsafe at any speed? Borders, mobility and 'safe citizenship'. *Citizenship Studies*, 14:1: 75-88.
- Noori, S. (2022). Suspicious Infrastructures: Automating Border Control and the Multiplication of Mistrust through Biometric E-Gates. *Geopolitics*, 27(4): 1117-1139.
- Noori, S. (2022). Navigating the Aegean Sea: smartphones, transnational activism and viapolitical in(ter)ventions in contested maritime borderzones. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(8): 1856-1872.

- Scheel, S. (2019). *Autonomy of Migration? Appropriating Mobility within Biometric Border Regimes*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tazzioli, M. (2022). The technological obstructions of asylum: Asylum seekers as forced techno-users and governing through disorientation. *Security Dialogue*, 53(3): 202-219.
- Trauttmansdorff, P., & Felt, U. (2023). Between Infrastructural Experimentation and Collective Imagination: The Digital Transformation of the EU Border Regime. *Science, Technology, & Human Values*, 48(3): 635-662.
- Valdivia, A., Aradau, C., Blanke, T., & Perret, S. (2022). Neither opaque nor transparent: A transdisciplinary methodology to investigate datafication at the EU borders. *Big Data Society*, 9(2): 1-17.
- Weitzberg, K., Cheesman, M., Martin, A., & Schoemaker, E. (2021). Between surveillance and recognition: Rethinking digital identity in aid. *Big Data & Society*, 8(1): 1-7.

Research element

Students enrolled in this module will have the opportunity to conduct desk-based research as part of their assessments. The first assessment, which is presentation, requires students to research a case study and analyse it using the themes and concepts introduced throughout the module and for that specific week. In the second assessment, students will be asked to write an essay analysing a specific case study. They will be provided with several questions to choose from for this assessment. The analysis of the chosen case study must be related to the themes introduced in the module.

Interdisciplinary

This module covers a wide range of sociological themes, drawing on related fields such as political sociology, anthropology, political science, international relations, and critical security and migration studies.

International

This module is designed to explore the conditions in which new technologies have been integrated into various public immigration systems around the world and their legal, political, and social implications. It covers various topics, such as profiling and risk assessments, which are used to assess entry into countries, especially in Europe and North America. Additionally, the module explores how new technologies, including predictive technologies, are being used to deter migration to these countries. Finally, the module examines the role of new technologies in humanitarian efforts, particularly in Africa and the Middle East.

Subject specific skills

- Being able to analyse how and to what extent physical borders are changing in the digital age
- Being able to reflect on the conditions in which new technologies have been integrated into migration and related systems

- Being able to theorise how borders categorise, select and process migrants in the digital age
- Being able to explore the legal, political and social implications of using new technologies in migration and related systems with a critical approach

Transferable skills

- Developing information literacy skills to gather and evaluate information from various sources.
 - Critical reading skills to analyse and interpret complex texts.
 - Critical thinking skills through reflection on existing policies and their implications.
 - Oral communication skills by participating in seminar discussions and delivering a short presentation
 - Written communication skills by writing a summative essay.
 - Research skills to conduct independent research and critically evaluate sources.
 - Policy analysis skills to understand the impact of current events on society.
 - Analytical skills to identify and evaluate patterns and connections in data.
-

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	82 hours (55%)
Assessment	50 hours (33%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

- Reading for seminars
- Preparing for seminars, answering set questions
- Preparing for the first assignment (presentation)
- Further reading for final essay
- Preparing and writing final essay

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Presentation	10%	10 hours	No
In this module, students will be required to prepare and deliver a 10-minute oral presentation that discusses a case study related to the themes and concepts introduced in a specific week. The seminar lead will allocate the presentation schedule based on the availability of space and students' preferences, and the presentation will be worth 10% of the total mark. The seminar lead will also provide guidance and additional support to students on how to prepare and deliver an effective presentation.			

Reassessment component

Essay			No
-------	--	--	----

If a student fails to deliver their 10-minute oral presentation for any reason, they will be given an alternative opportunity to submit a 500-word essay that analyses a relevant case study related to the themes and concepts introduced in that specific week. This reassessment component must be submitted by the deadline of the following week after the seminar they were originally allocated to.

Assessment component

Essay	90%	40 hours	Yes (extension)
-------	-----	----------	-----------------

The essay assessment comprises a 2,500-word research paper worth 90% of the total mark. Students will be required to conduct thorough research and compose a paper on a particular case study exploring one or several themes introduced in this module. They will be able to use the sources collected as part of their first assignment (presentation) and/or other sources. The students will be provided with several questions to guide this assessment, and they will be able to choose the one that aligns best with their research objectives.

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

The students will be provided with written feedback on their first and second assignments.

Availability

Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
- Year 2 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)