U.S. Immigration

This undergraduate colloquium examines the main themes in the history of U.S. immigration from the American Revolution to the present. Topics include the origins of migration; forced migration and slavery; naturalization and citizenship; anti-immigrant sentiment (nativism); ethnicity and race; and the evolution of government policy. We consider these topics in the context of historiographical debates concerning the foundation of the United States and the three great waves of immigration that followed: largely Irish, British, German, and Chinese before the 1870s; predominantly Eastern and Southern European from the 1880s through the 1920s; and genuinely global from 1965 to the present.

Irish Global Migration

No other European country in the modern era lost so high a proportion of its population overseas as Ireland. Counting those who went to Britain as well as the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, about 10 million Irish men, women, and children emigrated from Ireland since 1700. That number is about twice the population of the Republic of Ireland today and it exceeds the population of Ireland at its historical peak on the eve of the great famine. This graduate colloquium begins by considering the conditions in Ireland that led to emigration on such a massive and sustained scale. On that basis we examine different models of migration – as voluntary departure, exile or banishment, and diaspora – and proceed to analyze the principal themes in the history of the Irish abroad, including labor, gender, religion, politics, and nationalism.