**Refugees in the Early Modern Atlantic World**

0.0 – Module Lesson Plan

This module is part of the History for the 21st Century project (H21). History for the 21st Century is a collaborative project designed to serve students in introductory college history courses and their instructors. Together, we build, assess, and progressively improve free, online educative, enquiry-based curriculum. You can find out more about H21 by visiting <https://www.history21.com/>.

**Module Overview**

In this module, students ask what caused the forced migration of refugees in Europe, West Africa, and the Americas in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and, more broadly, who gets to define a refugee and why. Through two week of class meetings, students will trace the factors that shaped refugees’ movements and activities in these three regions. In doing so, they will be able to see that some of the factors shaping these forced migrations, even in far-flung parts of the world, were the same processes and just how closely connected these people’s lives were to one another. In addition, students will also learn to critique either sympathetic or disapproving assumptions about groups of migrants that might otherwise led us to reinforce our own preexisting beliefs. And finally, students will also explore how those assumptions came to emerge by looking at historical memories of refugees in later generations.

The goal of the module is to help students learn about the interconnectedness of the Atlantic World by the late 17th century through the lens of refugee movements, and to interrogate their assumptions about what historical subjects deserve our sympathy and why. To do so, it aims to help students understand:

* How the interaction of political, economic, technological, and social factors shaped why people fled and where they travelled to.
* How to interrogate and correct for assumptions and values that others and ourselves place on certain forced migrants as opposed to others

By the end students should be able to understand push and pull factors shaped all refugees movements, critique implicit biases in how humans discuss those factors, and see how people in Africa, Europe, and the Americas have a shared history going back centuries.

In order to achieve this understanding, students will also practice close reading, analysis, and synthesis of a variety of primary and secondary sources.

The module consists of four lessons, to be completed over two weeks. Included in this module are brief introductory readings, a series of primary sources, suggested discussion topics, and guides for leading discussions, slide decks with images, and some suggested assignments to accompany this modules. Feel free to adapt the materials to suit your needs! If you want to share an adaptation you find particularly successful or have a suggestion for a revision or update, feel free to contact the folks at *History for the 21st Century* for them to share with others.

**Module Map**

**Lesson 1: Introduction to Refugees in the Atlantic World**

The first lesson begins by asking students to consider what they might need to move quickly and adjust to a new life, as well as with a discussion of the poem “Home” by Warsan Shire. The lesson then reviews some key terms and interpretative frameworks for understanding migration and refugees, including push and pull factors and structural conditions that shape migrations.

**Lesson 2: Refugees in Western Europe**

Lesson two turns to historical content, and in particular examples of refugees in Western Europe in the 1670s and 80s in order to apply what they just learned in practice. Students will examine and analyze an excerpt from the memoire of a French Protestant woman who escaped certain persecution in her hometown of Nîmes in 1685. Later lessons will have more primary sources, but focusing on just one in this lesson provides give more time for practicing the interpretive skills of the module.

**Lesson 3: Refugees in Western Africa**

Students will then turn to west coast of Africa, which seems at first completely unconnected from the European example. Students will first learn the leading causes of widespread refugees movements along the African coast starting in the 1670s and 80s, compare the types of refugees that emerged there to those examined in the prior lesson, and then start to explore connections between the historical processes described in these two case studies and how they might have been connected. They will also consider who is recording these accounts of displacement, and what this can tell us about the role of power relations in the production and preservation of evidence recording the lives of refugees.

**Lesson 4: Refugees in the Americas**

The fourth lesson turns to examples of refugees in the American colonies. Two of the cases of refugees covered in Lesson 4 actually build on narratives already covered in Lessons 1 and 2: Huguenots and West Africans. The third, indigenous Americans has some parallels with the maroons and some parallels with refugees in West Africa. Students will begin by analyzing the primary sources and consider power relations in the production and preservation of the materials we have available on American refugees. In addition, they will also consider the push and pull factors of refugees shaping flight in the Americas, and compare cases across the Atlantic, asking what was different about the colonial context and how the Atlantic world was connected in the 1670s and 80s.

**Lesson 5: Memories of Refugees**

The final lesson compares memories of 17th century refugees in the 19th and 20th centuries. The goal here is to consider the power relations in historical narratives about refugees in ways that provide identity and meaning, but also create erasures and silences. The lesson culminates in asking students exploring ideas about refugees in the world around them, and preparing an assignment that explains how studying past refugee movements can help us respond constructively today.