“Thus says the Lord: you shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves.”

—Exodus 22:20

Where does our hospitality or hostility come from when we encounter the alien? Are our migration laws inherently secular pertaining simply to national security and cultural protectionism? This course offers a comprehensive analysis on the underlying religious fabric of migration patterns throughout the Americas from the 18th century to the present. We will investigate how the shifting political attitudes toward the alien are informed and buttressed by inclusive or exclusive interpretations of our sacred texts. As theologian Richard Kearney states, “the entire Bible, it could be said, is a story of struggles between different ways of responding to the alien.”

Our current political milieu speaks to the relevance of this course and the need for a more wholistic approach to migration rather than a reductive narrative of legal versus illegal.