

90 MIN • SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY

Criminalization of Aid

Objective: In Criminalization of Aid, students are asked to consider how offering assistance at the border is interpreted. In addition, students are asked to reflect on why aid workers who sometimes assist in the movement across borders have been criminalized for their actions.

Preparation: Read and reflect on Scott Warren's *Borders and the Freedom to Move* before coming to the session.

Lesson plan

Task 1: Introductory activity

25 MIN

Border advocacy



The New Yorker

When Humanitarian Aid is Considered a Crime

<https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/the-new-yorker-documentary-when-humanitarian-aid-is-considered-a-crime>

Watch the New Yorker video about Scott Warren's arrest for aiding people as they attempted to cross the US-Mexico border (16:36).

Criminalization of Aid

As a class, have an opening/brainstorming discussion:

- What is your initial reaction to Scott Warren's story?
- What are the different approaches that advocates and state officials took in this story?
- What do people feel is at stake in such border crossings?

TOTAL TIME / 50 MIN

Task 2: Engaging in oral histories

Both the US and Canadian governments have made moves over the past decade to criminalize assistance to asylum seekers. This is part of the context of the more recent border crossings from the US into Canada, where advocacy groups in border communities organized to assist people on the move. One such group developed a flyer to provide information to the thousands of people coming through their community.

5 MIN

A. Introduction

“ In 2016 when residents began hearing about asylum seekers crossing into Canada at Roxham road, June stepped into action. As one of the founding members of Plattsburgh Cares, June continues to deliver food and supplies to those in need.



43:28-45:15

[Listen to the excerpt from June's interview](#)

To follow along with June's story, see the attached transcript.

In her interview, June talks about the flyer that Plattsburgh Cares produced for asylum seekers crossing into Canada. The following article shows how government officials responded to this flyer.



iPolitics – Rachel Gilmore

Fix Guide for Asylum Seekers, Ottawa Urges

<https://ipolitics.ca/2018/05/24/fix-guide-for-asylum-seekers-ottawa-urges/>

30 MIN

B. Group Activity

Break into small groups and assign each group one of these three perspectives

- Government official (Canadian and/or US)
- Plattsburgh Cares advocate
- Person thinking of crossing the border

(hint for the instructor: prompt students to think about key concepts, e.g. smuggling, safety, humanitarian aid)

In groups:

1. Read Plattsburgh Cares' flyer



PLATTSBURGH CARES

Plattsburgh Cares asylum flyer

2. From your assigned perspective discuss the following questions

- a) How do you interpret the purpose of this flyer?
- b) What stands out to you as important or problematic?
- c) What questions does this raise about safety and security?

3. Keeping in mind June's comments, the government response, and the flyer itself, come up with a three sentence statement that summarizes your position on this flyer.



~15 MIN

C. Full-class debrief

Groups share and discuss their positions with the class.

TOTAL TIME / 15 MIN

Task 3: Wrap-up discussion

Reflect on Scott Warren's and June's stories. These two advocates present different kinds of aid to migrants crossing the border. For Scott, water, food and shelter were given to border crossers in the desert at the US/Mexico border, whereas Plattsburgh Cares developed an informational flyer and provided aid at the border. In both cases, humanitarian aid was portrayed as potentially dangerous, clearly with dramatically different responses.

- Why is it important to understand how advocates at these borders define their work? What can we learn by reflecting on their stories?
- What are some of the potential implications of criminalizing advocacy work related to borders and migration as in the case of these two examples?

Resources

1h 24 MIN

June's story

“It's not work. It's bearing witness. It's being there, it's really a gift.”



LISTEN TO JUNE'S STORY



I POLITICS – RACHEL GILMORE

Fix Guide for Asylum Seekers, Ottawa Urges

<https://ipolitics.ca/2018/05/24/fix-guide-for-asylum-seekers-ottawa-urges/>



DIALOGUEES IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Borders and the freedom to move (2016)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820619876399>

Additional resources



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

“Proud to Aid and Abet Refugees campaign”

<https://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/aidandabet/index.htm>



ORGANIZATION

Plattsburgh Cares

<https://plattsburghcares.org/>



CBC NEWS

CBC Canadian officials to counter 'incomplete' information in flyers with tips on illegal border crossing

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/flyers-plattsburgh-asylum-hussen-1.4676874>



CBC

CBC Road to Roxham

<https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-118/38e815a-012c232993a>

90 MIN • SECONDARY/POST-SECONDARY

Criminalization of Aid

Objective: In Criminalization of Aid, students are asked to consider how offering assistance at the border is interpreted. In addition, students are asked to reflect on why aid workers who sometimes assist in the movement across borders have been criminalized for their actions.

Preparation: Read and reflect on Scott Warren's *Borders and the Freedom to Move* before coming to the session.

Student Handout

Task 1: Introductory activity

25 MIN

Border advocacy



The New Yorker

When Humanitarian Aid is Considered a Crime

<https://www.newyorker.com/video/watch/the-new-yorker-documentary-when-humanitarian-aid-is-considered-a-crime>

Watch the New Yorker video about Scott Warren's arrest for aiding people as they attempted to cross the US-Mexico border (16:36).

Criminalization of Aid

As a class, have an opening/brainstorming discussion:

- What is your initial reaction to Scott Warren's story?
- What are the different approaches that advocates and state officials took in this story?
- What do people feel is at stake in such border crossings?

TOTAL TIME / 50 MIN

Task 2: Engaging in oral histories

Both the US and Canadian governments have made moves over the past decade to criminalize assistance to asylum seekers. This is part of the context of the more recent border crossings from the US into Canada, where advocacy groups in border communities organized to assist people on the move. One such group developed a flyer to provide information to the thousands of people coming through their community.

5 MIN

A. Introduction

Listen to the excerpt from June's story and follow along with the attached transcript.

In 2016 when residents began hearing about asylum seekers crossing into Canada at Roxham road, June stepped into action. As one of the founding members of Plattsburgh Cares, June continues to deliver food and supplies to those in need at the border six days a week. Plattsburgh cares is a coalition of faith, service, and activist groups working in Plattsburgh, New York.

June

11 August 2019



Read the excerpt from June's story

June: The flyer was put together probably within six months... Six to nine months of forming Plattsburgh Cares. It went on our website and we printed many copies, and we shared them locally in the hotels and other places, the bus station, other places that we thought people might be travelling through and might need the information. Have you looked at it?

RRTeam: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

June: Yeah. It's basically, in our mind, it was a 'things you need to know and how to stay safe.' And we were really motivated by the taxi drivers that were price gouging, or maybe weren't even legit drivers that might mislead them and take them to some place unsafe... or traffickers, or whatever. Might as well not be naïve about things. And that was the goal of that, to just give people good information that they needed to know. Of course, I'm sure you know that it kind of blew up in our faces because someone found it in a hotel in Plattsburgh and claimed that it was inviting people to cross illegally into Canada, which of course was not our intention whatsoever. I don't think we have those fires out right now, but it is still electronically is available, and it does give really good information.

Then as far as... You talked about other things in Plattsburgh. I can't really answer that. I'm not really sure if that flyer has been beneficial to people who maybe have ended up deciding to stay in Plattsburgh. I don't really know.

Criminalization of Aid

In her interview, June talks about the flyer that Plattsburgh Cares produced for asylum seekers crossing into Canada. The following article shows how government officials responded to this flyer.



iPolitics – Rachel Gilmore

Fix Guide for Asylum Seekers, Ottawa Urges

<https://ipolitics.ca/2018/05/24/fix-guide-for-asylum-seekers-ottawa-urges/>

30 MIN

B. Group Activity

In a small group, you will be assigned one of these three perspectives

- Government official (Canadian and/or US)
- Plattsburgh Cares advocate
- Person thinking of crossing the border

In your group read Plattsburgh Cares' flyer



PLATTSBURGH CARES

Plattsburgh Cares Flyer

2. From your assigned perspective discuss the following questions
 - a) How do you interpret the purpose of this flyer?
 - b) What stands out to you as important or problematic?
 - c) What questions does this raise about safety?
3. Keeping in mind June's comments, the government response, and the flyer itself, come up with a three sentence statement that summarizes your position on this flyer.

~15 MIN

C. Full-class debrief

Share and discuss your position with the class.

TOTAL TIME / 15 MIN

Task 3: Wrap-up discussion

Reflect on Scott Warren's and June's stories. These two advocates present different kinds of aid to migrants crossing the border. For Scott, water, food and shelter were given to border crossers in the desert at the US/Mexico border, whereas Plattsburgh Cares developed an informational flyer and provided aid at the border. In both cases, humanitarian aid was portrayed as potentially dangerous, clearly with dramatically different responses.

- How do advocates define their work?
- Why is it important to understand how advocates define their work?
- What is the danger of criminalizing such work?
- What can be learned from looking at the stories of advocates at these borders?

Resources

cHAMPLAIN • 1h 24 MIN

June's story

“It's not work. It's bearing witness. It's being there, it's really a gift.”



LISTEN TO JUNE'S STORY



IPOLITICS – RACHEL GILMORE

Fix Guide for Asylum Seekers, Ottawa Urges

<https://ipolitics.ca/2018/05/24/fix-guide-for-asylum-seekers-ottawa-urges/>



DIALOGUES IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY

Borders and the freedom to move (2016)

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2043820619876399>

Additional resources



CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES

“Proud to Aid and Abet Refugees campaign”

<https://ccrweb.ca/sites/ccrweb.ca/files/static-files/aidandabet/index.htm>



ORGANIZATION

Plattsburgh Cares

<https://plattsburghcares.org/>



CBC NEWS

CBC Canadian officials to counter 'incomplete' information in flyers with tips on illegal border crossing

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/flyers-plattsburgh-asylum-hussen-1.4676874>



CBC

CBC Road to Roxham

<https://gem.cbc.ca/media/short-docs/season-1/episode-118/38e815a-012c232993a>