

## Instructions for the Discussion of Immigration

At our last topical seminar we made several changes to the schedule for the spring. Our February 14 seminar will now be on the issue of immigration. Please post your written responses by Monday, February 12. (Artificial intelligence rescheduled to April.) Over the last 20 years Congress has made five major attempts at reforming immigration without success. Over the last two years US border patrol reports that they had roughly 3 million encounters each year with persons seeking to enter the United States. They are expecting this trend to continue if no policy changes on immigration are made.

The goal of the seminar is to hopefully gain a deeper understanding of the issues associated with immigration policy from an objective frame of reference. The focus of the conversation will be on policy rather than immigration politics.

*Following is an article from Yahoo! News that summarizes the previous attempts at immigration reform. [Congress has failed over 20 years to reform immigration: here's a timeline \(yahoo.com\)](#)*

**2001** — President George W. Bush and Mexican President Vicente Fox, friends from Bush's days as governor of Texas, held high-level discussions on a comprehensive immigration reform plan that they hoped would build a guest worker program and provide legalization for what were then about 8.5 million undocumented people in the U.S. Both made the issue a top priority, with Bush making Mexico the destination for his first foreign visit and Fox attending the Bush's first state dinner. But it all fell apart a few days after the dinner when terrorists hijacked four planes and attacked the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon on Sept. 11, 2001. The attacks led to a marked shift in immigration policymaking.

**2005** — Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass., drafted the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, better known as the [McCain-Kennedy bill](#). It would have provided six-year work visas for people not legally in the U.S. and a chance for people not legally in the country to become legal residents after having paid fines and passed background checks. The bill would have created an "essential worker visa" that would have allowed 400,000 workers a year to work in the U.S., as well as a path to a legal residency. It never got a vote in the Senate.

**2005-06** — House Republicans drafted an enforcement-only bill, also known as the [Sensenbrenner](#) bill after a chief author, former Rep. James Sensenbrenner, R-Wis. The bill included harsher penalties for illegal immigration and would have classified people in the U.S. illegally and anyone who helped them as felons. It also called for hundreds of miles of fencing along the U.S.-Mexico border. The harsh provisions

triggered [massive protests](#) around the country, mostly by Latinos. The bill passed the House, and the [Senate passed](#) the Comprehensive Reform Act of 2006, which was backed by the Bush White House. Differences in the two bills were never reconciled.

**2007** — Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., pushed a [compromise bill](#) that included a path to citizenship, visas for high-skilled workers and funding for more border barriers, border enforcement technology and agents. The bill had bipartisan support from Sens. Jon Kyl, R-Ariz., Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., and others, and it had solid backing from Bush. It failed to get a vote in the Senate.

**2013** — With President Barack Obama in the White House, a bipartisan group of senators, nicknamed the [Gang of 8](#), negotiated an immigration reform bill that was approved in the Senate. The bill included a path to legal status and eventual citizenship, and it established “goals,” such as putting up 700 miles of border fencing and getting an employment verification system up and running before people who were in the country illegally could apply for legalization. It also would have added as many as 40,000 Border Patrol agents. A less celebrated bipartisan [group of eight members](#) was working on a bill in the House, but it disintegrated without having introduced a bill. House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, announced that there would be no movement on immigration.

*Following is a response from ChatGPT to the question of identifying the major issues surrounding immigration in the United States.*

Immigration is a complex and multifaceted issue in the United States, with various perspectives on the matter. Some major issues associated with immigration include:

**Illegal Immigration:** The presence of undocumented immigrants is a significant concern. Debates revolve around border security, enforcement of immigration laws, and finding a solution for the millions of undocumented individuals already in the country.

**Economic Impact:** Discussions often focus on the economic effects of immigration, including its impact on job markets, wages, and overall economic growth. Supporters argue that immigrants contribute to economic vitality, while critics express concerns about job competition and strain on social services.

**National Security:** National security is a key consideration, especially in the context of border control. There are concerns about potential threats posed by individuals entering the country illegally, as well as the need to secure borders against illegal activities.

**Cultural and Social Integration:** The issue of cultural assimilation and social integration arises, with discussions on the impact of immigration on national identity, values, and social cohesion. Balancing diversity and unity is often a challenge.

**Family Separation:** Policies related to family reunification and the issue of family separation, particularly at the border, have been sources of controversy. Balancing enforcement of immigration laws with humanitarian considerations is a challenge.

**Asylum and Refugee Policies:** The U.S. faces challenges in handling asylum seekers and refugees. Issues include the backlog of asylum cases, the conditions of detention centers, and determining eligibility for asylum.

**Legal Immigration System:** The legal immigration system faces criticisms for being complex and in need of reform. Discussions revolve around visa programs, pathways to citizenship, and the overall efficiency and fairness of the immigration process.

**Labor Market Needs:** The mismatch between labor market demands and the available workforce is a concern. Discussions center on addressing skill shortages, promoting legal avenues for employment-based immigration, and ensuring a balance in the labor market.

**Humanitarian Concerns:** There are ongoing discussions about the humanitarian aspects of immigration, including providing assistance to refugees, addressing the root causes of migration, and upholding human rights

The seminar will focus on our individual thinking and our collective thoughts about what needs to be done with immigration policy. To help frame our thinking, I have included an excerpt from Yuval Noah Harari's book "21 lessons for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century" that offers a framework for thinking about this issue. In addition, read the materials from the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy that is also included.

In preparation for the seminar, elaborate on several of the issues that you feel are central to the discussion of immigration policy.

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