Migration Mastered:
The New School for Social Research launches Zolberg Center on Global Migration

With shifting stances on immigration policy in Europe and America and increasing numbers of refugees in the Near East, Africa and Asia, global migration is at the forefront of international and political studies. The announcement in early March to expand the New School for Social Research’s academic focus on these topics couldn’t come at a more strategic time. Alexandra Défano, an assistant professor of global studies, and Miriam Ticktin, an associate professor of anthropology, were both tapped to co-direct the Zolberg Center, which, according to the school, "will provide a space for research and scholarship, policy debate, and discussion with activists and artists around issues of global migration and mobility, their economic impact, political consequences and their meaning for issues of identity and citizenship.”

"The Zolberg Center will put the New School at the forefront of important scholarly, policy and cultural debates around migration," commented William Milberg, the dean of the New School for Social Research, about the initiative to launch next fall. "We look forward to the collaboration across academic disciplines, engaging new ideas and inspiring scholarly debates, the formation of this new center will surely bring about."

The Zolberg Center will be an attractive option for political and social scholars alike, with a big draw being its ability to lasso notable speakers and panels while supporting interdisciplinary research. The center takes its name from the late Aristide Zolberg (1931-2013), a former professor of politics at the New School for Social Research who championed the academic study of immigration politics, ethnicity and the integration of displaced or relocated people. Mr. Milberg said that its primary focus will hover around three key subject areas: migration and mobility within the Global South, intersections of global migration and new forms of media and technology, and the transnational relationships between emigrants and their home countries.

The Zolberg Center has already been busy. A March 5 launch event highlighted Kenneth Prewitt, the Carnegie professor of social affairs at Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs, who led a talk on "What Is Your Race? And Why the State Wants to Know" and discussed his forthcoming book on racial politics in the U.S. Just last week, Seyla Benhabib of Yale University took the stage to speak on "The Rights of Others and the Critique of Humanitarian Reason."

The dean also announced that this upcoming fall the Zolberg Center plans on forming and funding working groups and labs for its student body that will address areas of common interest related to global migration among faculty and students.

On May 1, there will be a workshop on memory and migration, with a keynote speech by Michael Rothberg and Yasemin Yildiz (of the University of Illinois) on "Citizens of Memory: Citizenship between Holocaust Remembrance and Transnational Migration."


Decision Science

NYU explores neuroscience behind economics, business and urban life with new Institute

Neuroscience might just be the answer to solving urban planning, economic upswings and downswings and unlocking best business practices. At least that’s what New York University claims by establishing the new Institute for the Interdisciplinary Study of Decision-Making (ISDM).

"Our goal is to better understand the mechanisms, predict the impacts and shape the policies that will define the future of decision-making scholarship," said Paul Glimcher, a professor in NYU’s Center for Neural Science and ISDM’s director. "We hope to define a new kind of decision science that will influence not only international academic scholarship but also medical practice, financial markets and the social policies that shape our urban setting."

ISDM is a promising and innovative bet for the school that will consider neuroscience and similar academic research as a way to generate new understanding of the human decision-making process and correlate findings to business and governmental practices, including consumer trends or voter constituent habits. Thanks to existing NYU schools and centers, ISDM’s potential perspective and resources are impressive. Mr. Glimcher said that they will rely heavily on the Center for Urban Science and Progress (CUSP), the Stern School of Business, Langone Medical Center and a handful of global academic centers and campuses in Abu Dhabi and Shanghai.

"With access to the massive data streams flowing through the city of New York, ISDM has the opportunity to test models and policies developed by scholars at a previously unimaginable scale," he elaborated. "Moreover, NYU’s unique assets offer an unparalleled opportunity to initiate scholars studying decision-making in a synergy that would be possible nowhere else."


A Battle of Cost

Pressure mounts as thousands demand more affordable higher education and less debt

They took to City Hall, enraged at the inefficiencies of the New York State Tuition Assistance Program (TAP). On March 25, a sea of ambulance students, parents and concerned others, united by the New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG), amassed to protest the lack of reform by the New York State legislature and Governor Andrew Cuomo and their inability to expand TAP to strengthen financial access to college and reduce student loan debt.

According to the student financial aid agency, in 2012-13, Gov. Cuomo’s Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) assisted more