AILA Asylum Online Course

This intermediate course provides thorough, practical information to immigration practitioners who are new to asylum practice or who want to delve deeper into this important area of immigration law.

Module 1: Legal Standards for Asylum Eligibility

This module provides a brief history and an overview of the legal standards that must be satisfied to prevail in an asylum claim. The module will serve as a useful introduction to the topic and as a preparatory checklist, dividing the required elements of a claim into five distinct elements.

- Video: Introduction to Legal Standards for Asylum Eligibility
 - Very Brief History
 - o The Importance of International Law
 - Intent: To Bring United States into Conformity with Protocol
 - U.N. Human Rights Commission (UNHCR) Guidance a Useful Interpretive Tool
 - o Introduction to Components: What, Who, Where, When, Why:
 - What: Is the Harm Persecution?
 - Who: State or Non-State Actor?
 - Where: Relocation Reasonable?
 - When: Past or Future Persecution?
 - Why: Is Persecution on Account of a Protected Ground?
- *Reading:* D. Cleveland, "Asylum and Related Claims for Relief," *Navigating the Fundamentals of Immigration Law* (2024–25 Ed.)
- **Document:** Checklist of "The Five Ws"
- *Video:* What Is Persecution?
 - What: Persecution = Severe Harm + Failure of State Protection
 - Severity of Harm Requires Context
 - Example: Age or Occurring in Custody
 - Verbal Threats
 - Special Cases
 - Prosecution
 - Conscription
 - Who: State Accountability
 - Government Is the Prosecutor; or
 - Government Is Unwilling or Unable to Protect
 - When: Past or Present? Either Can Suffice, but Different Paths Forward
 - Past Persecution Creates Rebuttable Presumptions:
 - Of Well-Founded Fear
 - That Internal Relocation Unreasonable
 - Burden Shifting: U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Has Burden to Rebut Presumptions
 - Humanitarian Asylum When Well-Founded Fear Is Rebutted: Two Bases
 - Severity of Past Harm
 - Other Serious Harm
- Video: Well-Founded Fear

- o *Immigration and Naturalization Service v. Cardoza-Fonseca*, 480 U.S. 421 (1987): Ten Percent Chance Enough
- o Two Parts to Well-Founded Fear:
 - Genuine Subjective Fear
 - Objective Evidence
- Only Enough Objective Evidence to Demonstrate a Slight but Discernible Chance of Persecution
- o Goal Is to Ensure Protection Is Not Provided to Those with Purely Fanciful or Neurotic Fears
 - Country Condition Expert or Evidence Strongly Recommended
 - "Pattern or Practice"
 - Airplane Analogy
- Exercise: Which of These Factors Should Matter for an Asylum Case?
 - o Treatment of Family Members Still in the Home Country
 - o Delay in Departing Home Country
 - Return to Home Country
 - Obtaining Passport from Home Country
 - Legal Departure from Home Country
- Video: "Internal Relocation" or "Credibility and Corroboration"
 - Internal Relocation: Reasonableness Factors in the Regulations
 - Other Serious Harm in the Place of Suggested Relocation
 - Any Ongoing Civil Strife Within the Country
 - Administrative, Economic, or Judicial Infrastructure
 - Geographical Limitations
 - Social and Cultural Constraints—e.g., Age, Gender, Health, Social and Familial Ties
 - New Factor: Climate Change (White House October 2021 Report)
 - Credibility and Corroboration
- **Document**: Checklist of Internal Relocation Factors
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Jeffrey S. Chase (ML), Online Course Committee, Brooklyn, NY Cindy Zapata, Cambridge, MA

Module 2: Protected Grounds and Nexus

This module provides an overview on the five protected grounds for asylum – race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and membership in a particular social group (PSG). It provides tips on formulating a PSG and proving nexus as well as ethical considerations in filing a case where the facts or case law appear to be weak or unfavorable.

Module Outline:

• Video: Overview to Protected Grounds

- o Define and Give Examples of Common Claims Each Protected Ground
 - Race
 - Nationality
 - Religion
 - Political Opinion
 - Introduction to Particular Social Group (PSG)
- o More Than One Protected Ground May Be Applicable
- Video: Breaking Down the Elements of a Particular Social Group
 - o Brief History of PSG Case Law; Matter of Acosta
 - o Three-Part Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) Test
 - Immutability
 - Social Distinction
 - Particularity
 - Evolving Area of Law
 - o Circularity
 - o Examples of PSGs and Common Types of Asylum Claims Involving PSGs
- *Document:* PSG Handout and Chart of Types of Evidence to Establish Immutability, Social Distinction, and Particularity
- **Reading:** Z. Albun et al., "The Art of Crafting Viable Social Groups," *Immigration Practice Pointers* (2022-23 Ed.).
- Video: Steps to Establishing a Particular Social Group Claim
 - Formulating a PSG
 - o Evidence of the Cognizability of the PSG
 - o Establish Applicant's Membership in the PSG
 - Evidence Nexus to the PSG
- *Video*: What Is Nexus?
 - o Past/Future Harm "on Account of" a Protected Ground
 - o Protected Ground Must Be "One Central Reason" for the Persecution for Asylum
 - Need Not Be Sole Reason
 - Cannot Play Minor, Incidental, Tangential, Superficial, or Subordinate Role
 - Note Statutory Language, 6th/9th Circuit Case Law on "a Reason" for Withholding
 - o Multiple Reasons for Persecution Allowed
 - o Reason Persecutor Targets Applicant May Change Over Time
 - o Pre-Existing Personal Relationship Does Not Defeat Nexus
- *Reading:* M. Adrade *et al.*, "Nexus: Effectively Presenting Your Argument Without Dissecting the Mind of the Persecutor," *2021 AILA Asylum Conference Handbook* (AILA 2021).
- **Document:** Nexus Evidence Chart
- Video: Evidencing Nexus: How to Prove the "Account of" Element?
 - o Direct Evidence
 - o Circumstantial Evidence
 - o Identifying Pitfalls in Establishing Nexus to a Protected Ground
 - Substance Abuse
 - Criminal Intent
 - Pecuniary Interest
 - "I Don't Know Why" (Including Children/Developmental Issues)
 - o Strategies For Proving Nexus to a Protected Ground

- Video: Ethical Issues: To File or Not to File When the Facts or Case Law Are Unfavorable
 - o Ethical Considerations in Filing a Case Where the Facts or Case Law Appear to Be Weak or Unfavorable
 - Diligence: Zealous Advocacy
 - Meritorious Claims and Contentions
 - Candor Toward Tribunal
 - Duty to Client
 - Best Interests of Client: Weigh Personal and Legal Considerations
 - Frivolous Applications
- Exercise: Identifying Protected Grounds, Formulating PSGs, and Establishing Nexus
 - Testing PSG Formulation and Establishing Nexus Plus Screening for Other Protected Grounds
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Christine Lin (ML), Online Course Committee, San Francisco, CA

Ashley Huebner, AILA Asylum Conference Committee Chair/AILA EOIR-ICE Joint Liaison Committee Member, Glenview, IL

Bradley Jenkins, New York, NY

Module 3: Bars and Alternative Forms of Relief

This module discusses the bars to and asylum and withholding of removal, now referred to as "restriction on removal." The module faculty will discuss when and how the bars apply to asylum and restriction applicants.

- *Reading:* I. Greenstein and P. O'Dwyer, "Common Bars to Asylum," *Immigration Practice Pointers*, 2021–22 Ed. (AILA 2021).
- Video: One-Year Deadline Asylum Bar and Exceptions
 - o One-Year Deadline: Failure to File Within One Year of Last Arrival in the United States
 - Exceptions to These Bars for "Changed Circumstances" or "Extraordinary Circumstances"
 - Motion to Reopen Is Appropriate When Circumstances Based on Changed Country Conditions Here Under 8 USC §1229a(c)(7)(C)(ii) (e.g., Ineffective Assistance Counsel)
 - o Previous Asylum Application Denied by an Immigration Judge or the Board
 - Motion to Reopen May Be Raised
 - Ineffective Assistance Counsel
 - Changed Circumstances
- **Document:** Sample Motion to Reopen Based on Changed Circumstances
- Video: Firm Resettlement and Dual Nationality Asylum Bars and Exceptions
 - o Safe Third Country or Firm Resettlement Prior to Entering the United States

- Can Be Removed to a Safe Third Country That the Applicant Has "Entered" and Was Given a *Permanent* Status
- Not Applicable to Withholding and Convention Against Torture (CAT)
- Not Applicable to Derivatives
- Exceptions to Firm Resettlement
 - Applicant Shows No Significant Ties to the Third Country: Necessary Passage
 - Applicant Shows Third Country Imposed Restrictive Conditions—*e.g.*, Inability to Work or Travel, Buy Property, Access Education, Naturalize
- Dual Nationality: Asylum Bar Applies If Applicant Is Citizen of More Than One Country
 - Applicant Need Not Have Entered the Third Country for the Bar to Apply
- Video: The Asylum Persecutor and Criminal Bars and Exceptions
 - o Persecutor Bar
 - Ordered, Incited, Assisted, or Otherwise Participated in the Persecution of Any Person; on Account of Race, Religion, Nationality, Membership in a PSG, or Political Opinion
 - Criminal Bars to Asylum
 - Conviction for "Particularly Serious Crime," Such That Applicant Is a Danger to the United States
 - Aggravated Felonies as Defined in INA §101(43)(A) Are Particularly Serious for Asylum: "Per Se"
 - o Commission of "Serious Nonpolitical Crime" Outside the United States
 - Conviction Not Required
 - Just Commission of Crime
 - Probable Cause Notice on Interpol
 - o Applicant Poses a Danger to the Security of the United States
- Video: Terrorism-Related Inadmissibility Ground (TRIG) Bars and Exceptions
 - Engaged in Terrorist Activity
 - o Engaged in or Are Likely to Engage After Entry in Any Terrorist Activity
 - Incited Terrorist Activity
 - o Provides Material Support for Terrorist Organization
 - o Dearth of Case-Law on This Issue Because No Judicial Review
 - o Representative of a Foreign Terrorist Organization
 - o Member of a Terrorist Organization
 - o Persuaded Others to Support Terrorist Activity or a Terrorist Organization
 - o Have Received Military-Type Training from or on Behalf of Any Organization That, at the Time the Training Was Received, Was a Terrorist Organization
 - o The Spouse or Child of an Individual Who Is Inadmissible for Any of the Above Within the Last Five Years
- *Video:* Bars to Withholding of Removal
 - Non-Applicability of One-Year Filing Deadline
 - o Available to Applicants Who Have Been Convicted of Certain Crimes Barring Asylum
 - Persecutor of Others
 - o Convicted of a Particularly Serious Crime
 - Aggravated Felony Conviction Not Automatically Bar to Withholding Unless Five-Year or More Sentence, Imposed or Suspended
 - o Aggravated Felony Is Presumed to Be Particularly Serious

- Other Crimes Not Rising to the Level of Aggravated Felony May Also Bar Withholding of Removal If Particularly Serious
- o Particularly Serious Crime Requirements
- Video: Convention Against Torture Is Materially Different from Asylum and Withholding
 - Non-Applicability of One-Year Filing Deadline
 - o Non-Applicability of Most If Not All Bars to Asylum and Withholding
 - CAT Is Based on Torture Rather Than Persecution
 - Introduction to the Standards: More Likely Than Not Applicant Will Be Persecuted
 - Filing Deadlines Not Applicable
 - Criminal Convictions Not a Bar to CAT
- Video: Ethical Issues: Do You Still File Knowing the Client Is Barred?
 - o Does the Exception to the One-Year Filing Deadline Apply?
- **Document:** Chart for All Bars to Asylum
- Exercise: Material Support for a Terrorist Organization
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Erin J. Quinn (ML), San Francisco, CA Paul O'Dwyer, AILA Removal Defense Section Steering Committee Vice Chair, New York, NY Sophia M. Genovese, Albuquerque, NM Edward Neufville, Silver Spring, MD

Module 4: Standards and Best Practices for Evidence

This module discusses standards and best practices for evidence in asylum cases.

- **Document:** The Life of a Case: Timeline for Preparing a Defensive Asylum Claim
- Video: Burdens of Proof
 - o Initial Burdens of Proof for Asylum, Withholding, and CAT
 - o Shifting Burdens: Past Persecution, Internal Relocation, and the Bars
 - o Timing: Initial Burdens and Rebuttal Evidence
 - o The Role of Evidence: What Needs to Be Documented?
 - o Corroboration and Its Interplay with Credibility
- **Document:** Burdens of Proof
- *Video:* Types of Evidence
 - o Applicant's Testimony: Written and Oral
 - Corroborating Evidence
 - Witnesses: Lay and Expert
 - Country Conditions
- *Video:* Getting It into the Record: What Is Admissible?
 - o The Rules of Evidence in Immigration Court
 - Hearsay

- Foundation
- Authentication
- *Video:* When Things Go Sideways: Avoiding and Dealing with Pitfalls
 - o Inconsistencies
 - o Fraudulent Documents and Possibly Fraudulent Documents
 - o Lay and Expert Witness Prep: Who to Put on the Stand and How to Prepare Them
- Video: Ethics: What to Do When Something Smells Fishy
 - o "Help! I Think My Client Is Lying to Me"
 - o "Help! I Think This Witness Is Lying to Me"
 - o "Help! I Think This Document Is Phony"
 - o "Help! This Story Just Doesn't Ring True"
- Video: Mock Scene: Overcoming a Challenge to a Document's Admissibility
- **Reading:** D. Castillo-Granados, "Representing Unaccompanied Children: Our Ethical Obligations and Taking Care of Ourselves," *Immigration Practice Pointers* (2024-25 Ed.).
- Exercise: Responding to DHS's Rebuttal Evidence
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Ilana Etkin Greenstein (ML), Asylum Conference Committee, Senior Technical Assistance Attorney, Immigration Justice Campaign, Boston, MA

Maggie Arias, Coral Gables, FL

Chelsea E. HaleyNelson, Oakland, CA

Module 5: Mental Health, Cultural Competency, and Vicarious Trauma

This module provides an overview of how mental health interacts with the representation of asylum-seekers as well as discussions on the importance of cultural competency. The module will provide guidance on practical considerations of representing individuals with mental health symptoms, traumainformed interviewing as well as recognizing and preventing vicarious trauma.

- Video: Trauma-Informed Representation of Asylum Seekers
 - o Recognizing Trauma and the Effects on Your Client
 - o Trauma-Informed Interviewing
 - o De-Escalation and Grounding Techniques
- **Reading:** D. Lipinski *et al.*, "Practicing Client-Centered Lawyering for the Benefit of You and Your Clients," *Immigration Practice Pointers*, 2020–21 Ed. (AILA 2020).
- Video: Credibility Issues and Trauma
 - o How Trauma Affects Memory and Recall

- Ways to Address Credibility Concerns Arising Out of Client's Inability to Testify Accurately Due to Past Trauma and/or Mental Health
- **Document:** Grounding Techniques and Tips for Trauma-Informed Interviewing
- Video: Cultural Competency and Why It Is Important
 - O What Is Cultural Competency?
 - o Strategies to Provide Culturally Competent Representation
- Video: Ethically Representing Clients with Diminished Capacity and Mental Health Symptoms
 - o Ethical Considerations When Representing Individuals with Diminished Capacity
 - o Duty of Candor vs. Duty to Your Client
 - o Express Wishes vs. Best Interest of The Client and What to Do When Those Conflict
- **Document:** Sample Matter of M–A–M– Motion for Safeguards
- **Reading:** V. Barba *et al.*, "Mental Health Claims and Considerations: Ensuring Protections and Due Process for Your Client," *2021 AILA Asylum Conference* (AILA 2021)
- Video: Recognizing Vicarious Trauma in Ourselves and How to Cope
 - Signs of Vicarious Trauma
 - Strategies to Cope with Vicarious Trauma
- *Exercise:* Draft Sample Safeguards That Could Be Included in a Motion for Safeguards Based on a Hypothetical
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Veronica Barba (ML), Los Angeles, CA

Lauren N. Kostes, New York, NY

Mayra Alvarado, Managing Social Worker, Florence Immigrant & Refugee Rights Project, Phoenix, AZ

Module 6: Procedures

This module covers the relevant agencies involved in the process and describes asylum procedures, from the affirmative asylum proceedings that apply before USCIS to the defensive asylum proceedings that take place before the Immigration Courts.

- Video: Overview of the Asylum Process and Explanation of Affirmative vs. Defensive Procedures
 - Flow Chart
 - o Which Cases Proceed Affirmatively Before USCIS, and Which Proceed Defensively Before the Immigration Court?
 - o Referrals from the Affirmative Process to the Defensive Process
 - Special Case of Unaccompanied Minors
- **Document:** Flow Chart of Asylum Procedures
- *Video:* Affirmative Asylum Procedures
 - o Preparing and Filing the Asylum Application and Supporting Evidence
 - o Preparing for and Attending the Interview
 - o What Happens After the Interview: Decision and Possibility of Referral

- Suggested Video: Segment of Well-Founded Fear [PBS Video]
- Video: Defensive Asylum Procedures
 - Referrals from the Affirmative Process and Other Ways to Land in Defensive Removal Proceedings
 - Master Calendar Hearings
 - Preparing and Filing the Application (If Case Didn't Initiate Affirmatively) and Supporting Evidence, Including Expert Witnesses
 - o Pre-Trial Proceedings (e.g., Motions) and Preparing for the Merits/Individual Hearing
 - The Merits Hearing: Evidence Admissibility, Direct Examination, Cross Examination,
 Closing Argument, Preserving Errors, and Protecting Due Process
 - o The Decision and Appeals
- Exercise: Outlining an Oral Argument
 - Participants Will Sketch Out a Five-Minute Closing Argument on a Hypothetical Fact
 Pattern
- **Document:** Checklist for Merits Evidence Filing in Immigration Court
- Video: Electronic Filing, Webex, and Other Nitty Gritty
 - o eRegistry
 - o EOIR Courts and Appeals System (ECAS)
 - Webex Hearings
 - Video Hearings from Immigration Detention
 - o Dedicated Dockets
 - Case Flow Processing Memos
- Suggested Video: Mock Master Calendar Hearing
- **Document:** Master Calendar Hearing Script
- *Video:* Ethics: What to Do with False Client Testimony?
 - o Considering Whether to Offer Testimony Where There Are Doubts About Truthfulness
 - Discussion of Ethics Obligations Where Client Makes Statements on Direct That You Know Are False
 - Discussion of Ethics Obligations Where Client Makes Statements on Direct That You Later Learn Were False
 - o Discussion of Ethics Obligations Where Client Makes Statements on Cross That Are False
- *Reading:* E. Benz, "Navigating Our Broken Asylum System," *Immigration Practice Pointers* (2024-25 Ed.).
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Victoria Neilson (ML), AILA Asylum and Refugee Committee Co-Chair, Pleasantville, NY Breanna Cary, Publications Committee Chair, Edmond, OK Edna Yang, Austin, TX

Module 7: Border Issues

This module covers issues all asylum practitioners should be aware of relating to issues at the border.

Module Outline:

- **Document:** Important Update on Border Issues
- Video: Asylum Law 2023: A Q&A with Dree Collopy, Author of AILA's Asylum Primer
- *Reading:* Policy Brief: Analysis of Proclamation and Interim Final Rule on "Securing the Border" (June 5, 2024), AILA Doc. No. 24060510

Optional Content - Recorded July 2022

- *Video:* Overview of Practicing at the Border
 - Checkpoint and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP)/U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Authority Within 100 Miles of the Border
 - Expedited Removal
 - o Sketch of Title 42 (T42) and Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) Under Trump and Biden
- *Exercise:* Reading the I-213
- **Document:** Decisions at the Border
- Video: Expedited Removal and the Credible Fear Interview (CFI)
 - o Explain the Legal Framework of Expedited Removal
 - Typical Questions for CFI
 - o Typical Procedure for Requesting CFI
 - o Explain How to Challenge a Denied CFI
- Video: Mock Credible Fear Interview, by the Immigration Justice Campaign
- Video: Past Border Programs That May Still Be Relevant Today
 - Metering
 - o MPP 1.0
 - o Asylum Cooperative Agreements (ACAs)
- *Video:* Ethics: What Needs to Be Disclosed and When?
 - Disclosing Participation in Various Previous Border Programs, Including T42, and Entry Without Inspection (EWI) During MPP 1.0
- Video: Current Border Programs
 - o MPP 2.0
 - o T42
- Video: Children at the Border
 - o From CBP to Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR)
 - o Reno v. Flores, 507 U.S. 292 (1993)
 - The William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008 (TVPRA), Pub. L. 110-457, 122 Stat. 5044 (2008).
 - Reunification
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Module Faculty:

Jodi Goodwin (ML), Harlingen, TX Nicolas Palazzo, El Paso, TX Chelsea Jordan Sachau, Tucson, AZ

^{* =} invited, not confirmed

Module 8: Post-Asylum Issues

What happens after your client is granted asylum? This module discusses asylee benefits and responsibilities, adjustment of status for asylees, and ethics in post-asylum issues.

Module Outline:

- *Video:* Asylee Benefits
 - o Asylee Status and Path to Citizenship
 - Eligibility for Employment and an Unrestricted Social Security Number
 - o Derivative Asylum for Qualifying Family Members
 - o International Travel and Public Benefits
- Video: Asylee Responsibilities
 - Change of Address
 - o Taxes
 - Selective Service Registration
- Video: Adjustment of Status for Asylees and Derivative Asylees
 - Principal Asylees
 - o Derivative Asylees
 - o Inadmissibility Grounds and Waiver Under INA §209(c)
- Video: The Adjustment of Status Application and Interviews
 - o Preparing Adjustment of Status Application
 - o Adjustment of Status Interviews
 - o "Follow-to-Join" Derivative Asylees
- Exercise: Asylee Applying for Adjustment of Status
- Video: Ethics in Post-Asylum Representation
 - Discussing Potential Inadmissibility Issues and Waiver Before Filing Applications
 - o Discussing Potential Risk of Traveling to the Country of Persecution
- *Reading:* L. Wildes, "I-730 Follow-to-Join Refugees and Asylees" *Immigration Practice Pointers* (2023-24 Ed.).
- **Document:** Chart of Post-Asylum Issues
- Hypotheticals
- Resource List
 - o A Curated List of Additional Publications, Recordings, and Resources

Module Faculty:

Anam Rahman (ML), Fairfax, VA Stacie A. Hammond, Memphis, TN Laura Ferner, Springdale, AR

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