



Western

Centre for Research on
Migration and Ethnic Relations

Colloquium Series

Winter 2025

“Middle Class Nation Building Through Immigration?”

Dr. Elke Winter

Aging societies, shrinking birth rates, and labour shortages are prompting governments in the Global North across the political spectrum to join the "race for talent" and to attract immigrants that are relatively young, healthy, and "skilled". These migrants are neither wealthy nor reliant on low-wage work for survival. They are educated and embody middle class identities and aspirations. Selected for their “skills”, they are supposed to work and live among the native-born middle classes in their country of destination. The latter, however, are going through an intense period of economic strain, cultural change and ideological polarization, often leading to rising anxieties over immigration and integration. While the economic "squeeze" of the middle classes in the Global North is well documented, and the literature on right-wing populism is thriving, the two phenomena – middle class migrations and middle class strain – are rarely discussed in conjunction. This paper strives to mitigate this gap. It will address the following questions: How is nation building through immigration related to the idea of a thriving middle class? In the mid 21st century, who gets to belong to the new educated middle class?



Elke Winter is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Ottawa. Her current work examines how neoliberalism refashions societal (dis)integration along and across ethnic and racial fault lines. Professor Winter wrote *Max Weber et les relations ethniques* (PUL 2004), won the Canadian Sociology Association’s John Porter Tradition of Excellence Award for *Us, Them, and Others: Pluralism and National Identity in Diverse Societies* (UTP 2011), and edited several volumes, such as *When States Take Rights Back: Citizenship Revocation and Its Discontents* (Routledge 2020) and *Middle Class Nation Building Through Immigration?* (*Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 2024). Her newest book *Beyond Binaries and Polarization? Rethinking Pluralist Inclusion in Immigrant Nations* is forthcoming with Routledge. For her scholarship, Professor Winter has received numerous awards and fellowships, e.g. from the Royal Society of Canada, and the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation. Most recently, she served as William Lyon Mackenzie King Chair for Canadian Studies at Harvard University.

Thursday, February 27, 2025,
4:00 pm,

Social Science Centre, Room 5220.
All Welcome!