



**UNIVERSITÀ
DI TRENTO**

**Dipartimento di
Sociologia e Ricerca Sociale**

Ph.D in Sociology and Social Research Seminar

Prof. Philip Kasinitz – City University of New York

Studying Immigration in Nativist Times: Reflections from the United States

Wednesday, April 22nd, 2026 - 04.00 pm

Chair: Prof. ssa Francesca Decimo – Università di Trento

Discussant: Prof. Giuseppe Sciortino – Università di Trento

Abstract:

America has long been profoundly ambivalent about immigration and the resulting ethno-racial diversity. On the one hand, the US is known as a “nation of immigrants” with a history of immigrant integration and upward mobility. More than a quarter of the US population are now immigrants or the children of immigrants. Despite the Trump administration’s deportations and last year’s virtual end to refugee admissions, immigration continues to have a profound effect on America’s demography and economy. Yet the nation also has deep tendencies towards racial exclusion and nativist populism. During the second Trump administration we experienced a resurgence of anti-immigrant sentiment as well as sometimes brutal anti-immigrant policies reminiscent of the 1920’s. Both the federal government and right-wing media have sought to link unauthorized migration to criminality, despite clear evidence to the contrary. The Trump administration has also tried—so far unsuccessfully—to end birthright citizenship.

Yet counter tendencies are also evident: the broad resistance to ICE and border patrol raids in Minneapolis and the election of a popular, young Muslim mayor of New York City are recent examples. The courts have proved less reliable defenders of minority rights than the left generally hoped them to be. Still, they have, in some cases, continued to provide guardrails against the excesses of the present administration.

In this lecture we will explore the origins and current extent of anti-immigrant sentiment, regional and rural/urban differences in American attitudes towards ethnic diversity, the “culturalization of citizenship” and how the increasingly nativist landscape effects the work of migration researchers. This will hopefully lead to general discussion of the similarities and differences between the current situations in the US and in Europe.

Meeting room - Ground floor

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