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ECU Hosts Panel Presentation, “Refugee Crises: Syria and Beyond”

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Nov. 12, 2015) — A panel of East Carolina University professors in the Thomas Harriot College of Arts and Sciences Department of Geography, Planning and Environment will lead a free, open discussion on the “Refugee Crises: Syria and Beyond,” at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 18 in the Rivers Building, room 102, on the ECU campus.

“The Syrian refugee crisis following the 2011 Arab Spring and Syrian Civil War pulls on our hearts and for some, also their fears. It is estimated that there are 60 million displaced people and refugees worldwide – more than any other time in history,” said Tom Allen, professor of geography, and one of the panelists for the event. “Driven by war, persecution, economic desperation and environmental change, this wave of migration has yet to crest and is of staggering scope and numbers.”

Allen also said understanding the current refugee crisis and migrations may allow for advance planning and knowledge of how to manage future crises and humanitarian needs.

“The Syrian refugee crisis has brought worldwide attention to the plight of people who are forced from their homelands,” said Burrell Montz, chair of the Department of Geography, Planning and Environment. “This situation provides an opportunity to address the wider issues of forces, impacts and challenges associated with refugee relocations.”

The panel will go beyond the Syrian refugee crisis to provide a forum for understanding and discussing a range of issues associated with refugees and large-scale migrations. They will address the social, economic and environmental factors that influence migration decisions, the choice of routes, planning and infrastructure issues in the areas of resettlement, and how climate change is setting the stage for future migration challenges.

“As climate change begins to impact vulnerable societies, the displacement of Syrian refugees into Europe may be a preview for what lies in store,” said Dr. Tom Rickenbach, professor of atmospheric science and event panelist.

Panelists for the event include Dr. Beth Bee, assistant professor of geography, planning and environment; Dr. Tom Allen, professor of geography, planning and environment; Dr. Tom Rickenbach, associate professor of atmospheric science; and Mr. Gaines Townsend, teaching instructor of urban and regional planning.

For additional information, contact Montz at 252-328-6086, or via email at montzb@ecu.edu. Individuals requesting accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should call 252-737-1016 (voice/TTY) at least 48 hours prior to the events.

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