**Discussion Questions**

The following questions are presented chapter by chapter in order to guide deeper discussion of the primary themes raised in *Burning at Europe’s Borders.* Those interested in bringing the author into class discussions through a guest lecture, a film screening, or a virtual Q&A are encouraged to send a request via [www.isabella-alexander-nathani.com](http://www.isabella-alexander-nathani.com)

**Prologue**

1. What is the origin story behind the Universal Declaration of Human Rights? How did the circumstances of its creation shape original understandings of human rights and who is most deserving of them?
2. What are Bambino’s primary reasons for leaving home? Given these reasons, should he be considered an migrant, an asylum seeker, or a refugee under international law? How does this category differ from his actual experience of legal categorization at the border between Morocco and Spain?
3. If you could rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights today, in order to account for contemporary global crises, what changes would you make to it and why? How would you change the legal path that is offered to Bambino and other unaccompanied minors like him who have been displaced from their homes?

**Chapter One… Introduction**

1. In what ways can the process of migration (or specifically, the process of “the burning”) be studied as a ritual in the traditional anthropological understanding of Van Gennep’s ritual “rights of passage”?
2. How do the race, gender, age, and nationality of ethnographers shape the findings of their anthropological research? What other factors might shape an ethnographer’s status as an “insider” or an “outsider”? In what ways does the author view her standing as impacting this particular research project? How might the findings differ had this research been conducted by an ethnographer of a different gender, race, age, or nationality?
3. In your community, what are some of the primary ways in which physical space is used to delineate between different groups; to support or constrain the social or economic mobility of different groups; and to reinforce categories of race, categories of legality, or gendered expectations about work in the private and publics spheres?

**Chapter Two… At the Crossroads: Africa on the Map of Human Migrations**

1. How have historical patterns of migration, both forced and voluntary, in your country impacted the different categories of racial identity that exist? Have recent shifts in immigration policy introduced any new categories of racial or legal identity that might not have existed in past generations?
2. In the social sciences, studies of human migration have evolved from Zelinsky’s original “Mobility Transition” model to Martin & Taylor’s more recent “Migration Hump” theory. Drawing on examples from the chapter, select two of the major theories and highlight the ways in which it was challenged by other social scientists and the merits that it still holds within the field of anthropology.
3. Researchers often think of experiences of migration in terms of those who leave home, but what does the story of Hicham’s family reveal about the unique challenges and unique opportunities of those who stay behind? What does Hicham mean when he says: “being a Moroccan means being a migrant”?

**Chapter Three… Colony, Monarchy, Muslim Democracy: Morocco as the New “Destination” for African Migrants**

1. How has Morocco’s history at the crossroads between Europe, Africa, and the Muslim world impacted the different categories of racial identity that exist in the country? What new categories of racial and legal identity have been introduced by recent shifts in European immigration policy? How do these new categories impact the contemporary experiences of both citizens and non-citizens in Morocco?
2. What are some examples of the dual roles that Europe plays as “savior” and “captor” at its southernmost borders in North Africa? How do these roles shape migrants’ understandings of danger, security, opportunity, and expectation?
3. Why is Morocco considered by many to be an “exception” when discussing the Arab Spring movements that swept across the Middle East in North Africa in 2010? In what other ways (politically, economically, geographically, culturally) is Morocco “exceptional” when comparing it to other states in the MENA region?

**Chapter Four… Vulnerability and the Gendering of Political Status**

1. How does gender shape migrants’ journeys—from their decisions to leave home, to their experiences of mobility and detention, to their integration into new communities of temporary or permanent resettlement? Why do both Moroccan women and non-citizen women settled in Morocco feel “doubly stigmatized” through their roles in the public sphere?
2. In the field of anthropology, contemporary studies of human migration have moved from the transnational paradigm, first popularized by Glick-Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton, to more recent theories that place both migrants and non-migrants within a “transnationalized” space (i.e. Levitt). Drawing on examples from the chapter, select two of the major theories, highlighting the ways in which it was challenged by other anthropologists and the merits that it still holds within the field.
3. What are the legal definitions of a migrant and a refugee? What do the narratives in this book reveal about the primary challenges that migrants face in accessing the protected category of refugee, and who is most likely to face these challenges? Would you argue that the process of assigning legal status, as it currently stands, is an objective or a subjective process? What changes would you propose to increase the equitable distribution of human rights?

**Chapter Five… Burning Yesterday for Tomorrow: Images from the in Between**

1. What are the roles of individual and group narratives in exploring sociopolitical shifts on a global scale? Should comparisons be made between the contemporary experiences of minoritized individuals and populations living in different world regions? What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of cross-cultural comparisons in social science research?
2. What are the challenges of using memories, stories, and oral histories as “data”? How did the author’s role as ethnographer, which enabled her to move with her subjects as they interacted with different people and in different spaces, impact the “data” that she collected through her subjects’ narratives and images?
3. What can ethnographers gain by incorporating visual and material culture into traditional forms of anthropological research? Why is digital culture an increasingly important part of visual culture? In what ways can researchers creatively incorporate digital culture into their future research projects?

**Chapter Six… “*Le Peril Noir*”: The Racialization of Political Status**

1. In your county, what are some of the common assumptions that are made about an individual's legal status or socioeconomic class based on their race or ethnicity? How do these assumptions impact the daily lives of racial-minority citizens, racial-majority citizens, racial-minority non-citizens, and racial-majority non-citizens differently?
2. How do dress, language, accent, location, mode of transit, and bodily comportment impact readings of race? What other factors might shape *who* an individual is “read” to be by those around them? How can members of racial majority and racial minority groups use these factors to consciously shape how others “read” their identity? What are the limitations of individual agency in these scenarios?
3. Can legal status (the categorization of individuals as immigrants, asylum seekers, refugees, or citizens) be understood as a new form of racialization? In what ways does it differ from traditional forms of racialization, and in what ways is it similar?

**Chapter Seven… Conclusion**

1. How does studying migration (or specifically, “the burning”) as a ritual process challenge the traditional anthropological understanding of Van Gennep’s ritual rights of passage? Given the contemporary state of global migrations, would you make any changes to the three phases of ritual (the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phases) as Turner outlined them in his research?
2. What is border externalization? In what other critical border regions (beyond North Africa) can the impact of border externalization policies and practices be observed? Thinking back to the “Migration Hump” theory (Martin & Taylor), where do you think the next critical border regions will emerge, and why?
3. As is evidenced in this book, there are grave human rights violations found at multiple points in African migrants’ journeys from their home countries to the temporary spaces of settlement they commonly find themselves trapped in at Europe’s southernmost borders. Outlining their journeys from “start” to “liminal settlement” to “resettlement,” who are the primary parties responsible for protecting their human rights in each space? In what ways are these parties upholding or failing to uphold their legal obligations to protect them?

**Epilogue**

1. What factors contribute to the limited reporting of tragedies in the world’s most critical border regions? What steps could be taken to achieve greater visibility for those whose names are never spoken, whose faces are never seen, and whose lives are too often forgotten along with their deaths? What impact might greater visibility have on popular opinion about the migrant and refugee crisis?
2. What is the impact of criminalizing search and rescue missions along critical border crossings, like those in the Mediterranean Sea? Should those leading search and rescue missions maintain a primary allegiance to their native country’s laws, to the laws of the closest country, or to international laws?
3. If given the stage at the next United Nations General Assembly and the opportunity to share one narrative from this book, whose story would you share? Using this story, what argument would you make to the world leaders gathered there?