



# CCIS | Center for Comparative Immigration Studies

**UCLA** Center for the Study of **International Migration**

## Divided by the Wall: Progressive and Conservative Immigration Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border

Friday, October 23, 2020 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM

Will be held via Zoom



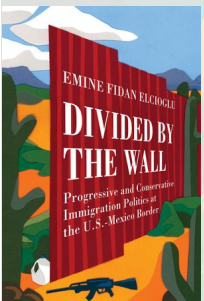
### **Author: Emine Fidan Elcioglu, (PhD, UC Berkeley)**

Emine Fidan Elcioglu is Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Toronto. At the intersection of sociology of migration and political sociology, her research examines how citizens make sense of non-citizenship and national gatekeeping.



### **Discussant: Tom Medvetz, (PhD, UC Berkeley)**

Tom Medvetz is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of California, San Diego. Before joining the UCSD faculty, he was a Postdoctoral Associate at the Institute for the Social Sciences at Cornell University. His research has focused on the relationship between knowledge and politics, particularly on such questions as what it means, practically speaking, to be an intellectual in political life today.



Why is immigration controversial? Drawing on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork, this talk begins to answer this question by examining the motivations and life histories of white, U.S.-born Americans who are active in two politically opposed, volunteer organizations in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. One organization is a leftwing, pro-immigrant group that provides water and other forms of aid to migrants that volunteer members encounter in Arizona's Sonoran Desert. The other is a rightwing, Minutemen-type immigration restrictionist group that patrols the very same regions to find and detain migrants for the U.S. Border Patrol. By focusing on activists who, because of the privileges of whiteness and U.S. citizenship, are not directly impacted by immigration policy, I consider what factors nonetheless compel their strong feelings about and decision to engage in this political struggle. Immigration politics, I argue, has become a terrain on which white Americans grapple with their social positions in an increasingly unequal world. I conclude by discussing how this finding may explain, in part, why immigration is such a polarizing issue and how addressing the underlying problems of social inequality may help mitigate the current contentiousness of immigration and border policy.

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