

## Does Skill Make Us Human? Migrant Workers in 21st Century Qatar and Beyond

Friday, January 20, 2023 | 12:00PM - 1:30PM Pacific Time  
Will be held via Zoom (This Event May Be Recorded)



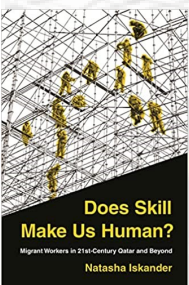
**Author: Natasha Iskander**

Natasha Iskander is the James Weldon Johnson Professor of Urban Planning and Public Policy at New York University's Wagner School of Public Service. Her research focuses on the relationship between migration, economic production, and the creation and erasure of different kinds of knowledge. She is the author of *Creative State: Forty Years of Migration and Development Policy in Morocco and Mexico* (Cornell UP 2010) and *Does Skill Make Us Human?: Migrant Workers in 21st Century Qatar and Beyond* (Princeton 2021), along with numerous academic publications and policy pieces on these issues.



**Discussant: Vanesa Ribas**

Vanesa Ribas is Associate Professor of Sociology. She studies race/ethnicity, migration, labor, political mobilization, and social inequalities more generally. She is the author of *On the Line: Slaughterhouse Lives and the Making of the New South*, an ethnography of social relations at a slaughterhouse in rural North Carolina.



As the 2022 World Cup in Qatar unfolded, the international press drew renewed attention to the serious labor abuses that the migrants building the infrastructure for the games experienced. This talk presents an overview of Natasha Iskander's *Does Skill Make Us Human? Migrant Workers in 21st Century Qatar and Beyond*, which details the complex social and economic context that produces working conditions in Qatar. Based on unprecedented ethnographic research on construction sites in Doha, interviews in eight languages, and fieldwork in migrants' countries of origin, the book explores how migrants are recruited, trained, and used, and it shows that the labeling of workers as unskilled is at the root of the labor conditions they endure. Skill distinctions in Qatar act as a marker of social difference powerful enough to adjudicate personhood, and to create hierarchies that shape all facets of work, labor recruitment, and migration policy, even defining responses to global warming. The politics of skill in Qatar — where 95 percent of the labor force is migrant — play out in ways that have lessons for analysis of migration and labor politics in context all around the world.

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