Political Science 854: Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict
Professor Nadav Shelef
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Course Description
Nationalism and ethnic conflict are among the defining phenomena of the modern epoch, yet our understanding of these phenomena remains contested, if not elusive. Where is the nation’s homeland? Who is part of “us”? What collective mission does are we to accomplish? How are these questions answered? Do the answers change? These and other questions of nationalism and national identity are at the heart of inter- and intra-national conflict around the world. This course will unpack the main theoretical approaches to understanding them and the conflict they generate (and show why these differences matter). It will then investigate the interactions between state-building and nation-building, the relationship between nationalism, citizenship and minority rights, the nexus between nationalism, ethnicity and conflict, the colonial legacies of nationalism, religious nationalism, and the impact of globalization on nationalism.

Course Requirements
Students are expected to attend each class ready to contribute to the discussion and to have done the readings assigned for each session prior to class. You should come prepared with two or three questions raised by the readings. This course is a discussion seminar and your active participation will determine how much you will get out of it.

Discussion is an academic skill. We can all improve at it. To help us do so, I would like us to practice the following discussion norms:
• Address each other by name.
• Assume that people in the room disagree with me.
• Practice intellectual humility and open mindedness.
• Approach disagreement with curiosity.

Students are also required to provide a critique of the readings that will serve as the starting point for our discussion in at least two separate weeks. These critiques should not be summaries of the readings. At the very least the critiques should argue the relative merits of the claims in the readings based on an evaluation of their assumptions, conceptual argument, research design, evidence, and implications. See the “Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research” below for questions to answer. The critiques need to be uploaded to Canvas by 8pm on the Wednesday before the class in question.

There will be no examinations in this course. The major assignment is an original research paper on an aspect of nationalism or ethnic politics that interests you. The paper should be between 8000 and 10,000 words and is due December 14th. Students are strongly encouraged to discuss the paper with me (and with your colleagues) throughout the semester.
Grading Criteria
Final course grades will be assigned according to the following weights:

- Class participation: 20%
- Critical Reviews: 20%
- Research paper: 60%

Course Readings
Readings are available online through the course’s Canvas website (canvas.wisc.edu). The following books have been ordered at the University Bookstore. You may also purchase them new or used on assorted online booksellers.

Questions to consider in formulating and evaluating social science research (thanks to Hein Goemans)

1. What is the central question?
   • Why is it important (theoretically, substantively)?
   • What is being explained (what is the dependent variable and how does it vary)?
   • How does this phenomenon present a puzzle?
2. What is the central answer?
   • What is doing the explaining (what are the independent variables and how do they vary)?
   • What are the hypotheses (what is the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, what kind of changes in the independent variable causes what kind of change in the dependent variable)?
   • What are the causal mechanisms (why are the independent and dependent variables related as in the hypothesis)?
   • How do the independent variables relate to each other?
   • What assumptions does the theory make?
   • Is the theory falsifiable?
   • What does this answer add to our understanding of the question?
3. What are the possible alternative explanations?
   • What assumptions does the central answer make about the direction of causality?
   • What other answers might there be to the central question, and to what degree do they conflict with the central answer?
   • Could the hypothesized relationships have occurred by chance?
4. Why are the possible alternative explanations wrong?
   • What is the logical structure of the alternative explanations, and why do they fail?
   • What is the empirical reasons for the failure of the alternative explanations?
5. What is the relationship between the theory and the evidence
   • What does the research design allow to vary (i.e., are the explanations variables or constants)?
   • What does the research design hold constant (i.e., does it help rule out alternative explanations)?
   • How are the theoretical constructs operationalized?
6. How do the empirical conclusions relate to the theory?
   • How confident are you about the theory in light of the evidence?
   • How widely do the conclusions generalize? What are the limitations of the study?
   • What does the provisionally accepted or revised theory say about questions of broader important?
Course Schedule

September 7: Introduction: What are ethnic groups and nations?
Connor, Walker. 1978. “A Nation is a Nation, is a State, is an Ethnic Group is a...,” Ethnic and Racial Studies, 1(4): 377-397.

September 14: When is a nation? The Primordial and perennial answer

September 21: No class

September 28: When is a nation II? The Modernist/Constructivist Answer

October 5: Where do ethnicities and nations come from? The instrumentalist answer
October 12: Towards a synthesis? Accounting for stability and change in ethnicity, nations, and nationalism

October 19: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the state
Craig Calhoun. “State, Nation and Legitimacy” Ch. 4 of Nationalism

October 26: Nationalism, citizenship, and Membership

November 2: Nationalism, ethnicity, and Colonialism
November 9: Nationalism, ethnicity, and conflict I

November 16: Nationalism, ethnicity, and conflict II

November 23: No class

November 30: Resolving ethnic and national conflict
Lustick, Midonowik, and Eidelson, “Secessionism in Multicultural States- Does Sharing Power Prevent or Encourage It”

December 7: The future of nationalism and ethnicity


**December 14: Papers Due!**