Govt 741: Nationalism in World Politics

R 4:30 – 7:10 p.m.  Professor Ahsan Butt
Krug Hall 253  Email: abutt4@gmu.edu

Research Hall 356
Office hours:  W 1:00 – 2:30 p.m.
and by appointment

Course description

This course is a graduate seminar on nationalism. It will focus on national and ethnic identities, where they come from, and how they affect everything from war to elections to culture. Essentially, we will consider the causes and consequences of entire peoples assuming particular identities. The course will be divided into four sections, each taking between two and four weeks of class time. We will begin with an overview of the birth of nationalism, especially as it relates to the modern bureaucratic state. We will then dissect some of the ideational underpinnings of nationalism. The third section of the course will focus on ethnic and/or nationalist conflict and violence in different arenas and at different scales. We will close with a consideration of nationalism in the contemporary era. Overall, the bulk of the material we cover will be theoretical, but empirical questions will also be considered throughout the course.

Course materials

There are eight books required for this course. You can purchase them from the campus bookstore or online marketplaces such as Amazon.com. The required books are:

- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (Verso)
- Ahsan Butt, *Secession and Security* (Cornell) [this book is free to download at bit.ly/secandsecfree]
- Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge)
- Jeffrey Kopstein and Jason Wittenberg, *Intimate Violence* (Cornell)
- Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries* (University of California)
- Yael Tamir, *Why Nationalism* (Princeton)

The readings for the course also consist of a number of journal articles, all of which are available online. Assigned book chapters will be made available on the course’s Blackboard site.

Course requirements

Students’ final grades will be determined by their performance in three areas:

- 4 response papers (40%). Students can choose which week’s readings they respond to (though, in general, it is advisable to space these out, such that you’re writing a response paper every 2-3 weeks). These papers must not *summarize* the readings but *critically*
respond to them. This exercise can include grappling with a theoretical, empirical, or methodological issue that plagues one or more of the readings, putting a number of the assigned readings in conversation with one another, or building upon and extending the insights and arguments contained therein. They must be 3-4 pages in length, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Response papers are due at noon the day of the class, either as an email attachment or a hard copy delivered to my office (Research Hall 356).

■ 1 research paper (40%). An original research paper on a question or topic that relates to nationalism and identity politics, broadly defined. On March 16, students will write and circulate a 3-5 outline of their plans for the research paper, and discuss the project in class with the professor and their colleagues on March 19. The final paper is due on May 8 and must be 15-20 pages (20-25 if you are a PhD student), not including citations and/or footnotes, and have 1-inch margins, size 12 font, and be double-spaced. Only hard copies will be accepted.

■ Class participation (20%). This is a seminar course and, as such, depends critically upon students’ active participation in class. Students must come to class prepared, having completed all the required readings, and be ready to discuss and debate issues raised in the readings and lectures. Students will also be required to do 1-2 oral presentations of the day’s readings. These presentations should, as with the response papers, not summarize the readings but critically assess them and should serve as the departure point for class discussions.

Late assignments

Assignments must be turned in at the time and place designated on the syllabus. Failure to turn in an assignment on time is unacceptable except with the prior agreement of the instructor (which will be given only in exceptional circumstances, such as a documented illness or family emergency). Except in documented cases of illness or emergency, a penalty of up to a full letter grade may be assessed for each day the assignment is late.

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the Office for Academic Integrity for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else’s work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

Students with disabilities or special needs
If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474, http://ods.gmu.edu. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS.

Email policy

In general, it is best to discuss any issues or concerns with me in person, either in class or in office hours. This is especially true for issues that require elaboration or a back-and-forth exchange. I will be happy to respond to emails in normal business hours (M-F, 8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.) that require a short, concise response and aim to do so in a timely manner. However, there will be occasions when it takes me 24 hours or more to respond.

Course schedule

Jan 23: Introduction

Jan 30: Concepts and roots of nationalism

- Max Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretative Sociology, Part II, chapter V.
- Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities, chapters 1-4.
- Anthony Smith, National Identity, chapter 2.
- Eric Hobsbawm, Nations and Nationalism since 1780, chapters 1-2.

Feb 6: Nationalism and the state

- Michael Hechter, Containing Nationalism, chapter 4.
- Eugen Weber, Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914, chapters 1, 6, 12, 17-18
- Michael Billing, Banal Nationalism, chapters 3, 5.
Feb 13: Nationalism, territory, and borders

- Peter Sahlins, *Boundaries: The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, chapters 1, 4-6.

Feb 20: Ethnic vs. civic nationalism

- Farida Fozdar and Mitchell Low, “‘They have to be abide by our laws…and stuff’: ethnonationalism masquerading as civic nationalism” *Nations and Nationalism* 21(3): 524-543.

Feb 27: Nationalism and religion


Mar 5: Nationalism and liberalism

- Yael Tamir, *Why Nationalism*, all.

Mar 12: NO CLASS – Spring break

Mar 19: **Student presentations on research projects**

Mar 26: Nationalism, colonialism, and resistance


Apr 2: Nationalism and interstate war

- Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*, chapter 5.

April 9: Nationalist civil conflict

- Kristin Bakke, *Decentralization and Intrastate Struggles: Chechnya, Punjab, and Québec*, chapter 1.

**Apr 16: Communal and urban ethnic conflict**

- Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, chapters 7-8

**Apr 23: American nationalism**

- Ta-Nehisi Coates, “My President Was Black,” *The Atlantic* [https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/01/my-president-was-black/508793/).

**Apr 30: Contemporary nationalism**


**May 8: Final papers due in my mailbox (Research Hall 359) or email by 5 p.m.**