

Poli 431: Nations and Nationalism

Professor Elissa Berwick

Winter 2024

E-mail: elissa.berwick@mcgill.ca

Office Hours: TBD

Office: 3610 McTavish, Room 33-3

Web: mycourses2.mcgill.ca

Class Hours: TR 2:35 - 3:55 PM

Class Room: ENGMD 280

TA: TBD

E-mail: TBD

Overview and goals

What is nationalism, and how does it relate to the nations whose borders structure both the affairs of states and the details of our everyday lives? Scholars disagree over where national projects come from, and what their implications for societies are. For some, nationalism is a quintessentially modern and malleable phenomenon; for others, it is a primordial and inescapable impulse. Through this course, you will gain an appreciation of how nationalism came to be and how it continues to shape our world. You will develop familiarity with the most important theorists of nationalism and their critics, both classic and contemporary.

The content of this course is divided into three parts. The first part (“Definitions”) will focus on defining the concepts of *state* and *nation* and on understanding the building blocks of national identity and the many varieties of nationalism. The second part (“Origins”) will offer an introduction to the most prominent explanations for the emergence and persistence of nationalism, and discuss how nationalism relates to language, literacy, economic development, the rise of the state, war, resistance to direct rule and imperialism. The third section of the course (“Consequences”) will consider some of the consequences of nationalism for diverse societies, including the development of solidarity and trust, the decision to include or exclude outsiders, and the relationship between nationalism and violence. The course will conclude by examining difference approaches to managing nationalism, including federalism, power-sharing arrangements, and partition.

Prerequisites

POLI 212 or POLI 227 or POLI 328. But it is best if you have previously taken at least one 300-level political science course.

Course structure

The course will meet for 1.5 hours twice a week. The first meeting of each week will consist of a lecture presenting key theories related to that week’s theme, while the second meeting will usually be discussion focused. Weekly reading assignments are divided into theoretical readings that provide background for the lecture and empirical readings intended for discussion. Readings for discussion will provide applied examples of theories covered in the lecture and/or present complications and counter-examples. Engaging with the empirical readings will give you the opportunity to critique the theoretical approaches and explore *why* we know what we know in political science.

Depending on enrollment and student preferences, conferences may replace some in-class discussion time.

Evaluation

1. Attendance (10%)

Lectures for this course are interaction intensive, so participation is a key part of your learning! We won't take attendance formally every day but there will be random, periodic check-ins. You can miss 3 of them without penalty.

2. Reflection essays (30%)

Over the course of the semester, you will select **two** different weeks to write reflection essays of approximately 1000 words. Essays can be either **personal reflections** on how the theoretical readings apply to your own experience of nationalism or **critical considerations** of the empirical readings, arguing for how they should (or should not) change our perceptions of the theories covered in class. In either case, you are expected to deeply engage with the assigned texts, using examples and direct quotations.

Reflection essays are due the week *after* the topic they cover. For example, if you write an essay on a topic covered in Week 3 it is due on Friday of Week 4 **by 5pm**. Policies concerning late essays are covered in the “policies” section below. A grading rubric for the reflection essays will be posted on MyCourses during the first week of classes.

3. Midterm Exam (30%)

Exam format

The midterm will be held in class during the usual class time on **Thursday, February 29**. During the midterm, you will be expected to identify the meaning and significance of six terms, picked from a set of twelve. The identification terms will be taken from both lectures and theoretical readings covering the first half of the course (“Definitions” and “Origins”). You will be expected to write 1-2 paragraphs about each term, demonstrating **both** that you have a grasp of basic factual information about the term being discussed **and** (more importantly) the significance of the term. That is, tell me not just what the term refers to, but why it matters. The best answers will situate the term within debates regarding the foundations and origins of nationalism.

Review session

The class before the midterm exam (**February 27**) we hold a review session. During the review session, you will work in small groups to propose terms for identification and brainstorm how to address them successfully. We will then all go over some of the terms and answers together. A grading rubric for the midterm will be provided before the review session.

4. EITHER Final Exam OR Research Essay (30%)

For this component of the course, you can pick whether to be take a final exam or write a research essay.

Final Exam

The final exam will take place during the final exam period, at a time and place set by the University. The exam will consist of three short essays, picked from a set of six questions. Questions will be large-scale and theoretical in nature, covering material from the entire course. A grading rubric for the final exam will be posted on MyCourses during the final week of classes.

Research Essay

Students who do not wish to take a final exam can alternatively write a research essay of approximately 3000 words, which will be due online at the same time as the University-scheduled final exam.

The essay will be based on independent research into a nationalist and/or separatist movement, whether historical (for example: German, Greek, Irish, Indian, Hungarian, Zionist) or more contemporary (for example: Algerian, Bangladeshi, Basque, Catalan, Kurdish, Quebecois, Scottish, Vietnamese).

Essays are expected to describe the most prominent features of the movement in question and discuss how well the theories covered in the course explain its origins or features. Is the movement particularly challenging for one theorist? Does it support one theorist over another? Is the movement very similar to others we've discussed, or is it quite different?

Essays can be based on any nationalist or separatist movement that you wish to write on, but it is recommended that you consult with the instructor before deciding on a topic. Essays must appropriately cite at least eight scholarly secondary sources. **If you are writing a research essay, you must submit a list of the scholarly secondary sources you will use by the end of last day of classes.** A grading rubric for the research essay will be posted on MyCourses during the final week of classes.

Materials

There will be 100-150 pages of required reading per week. All course readings will be available via MyCourses, either as PDFs or links to e-books. The exact reading assignments are subject to change, so please pay attention to what is posted on the course site. The correct reading will always be what is posted there.

Two books are available for purchase from the McGill Bookstore, though both can also be accessed via the McGill Library:

Anderson, Benedict (1983). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso.

Wimmer, Andreas (2018). *Nation Building: Why some countries come together while others fall apart*. Princeton University Press.

Schedule

Definitions

- Week 01, 01/04: Locating nationalism in time and space

Origins: nationalism as a dependent variable

- Week 02, 01/09-01/11: Ethnicity
- Week 03, 01/16-01/18: Print capitalism
- Week 04, 01/23-01/25: Economic development
- Week 05, 01/30-02/01: State-building: Socialization
- Week 06, 02/06-02/08: State-building: Public goods
- Week 07, 02/13-02/15: State-building: War and international relations
- Week 08, 02/20-02/22: Anti-colonialism

Midterm

- Week 09, 02/27-02/29 Review and midterm exam
- Week 10, 03/04-03/08 Reading break

Consequences: nationalism as an independent variable

- Week 11, 03/12-03/14: Identity
- Week 12, 03/19-03/21: Community
- Week 13, 03/26-03/28: Violence
- Week 14, 04/02-04/04: Managing nationalism
- Week 15, 04/09: A world without nationalism?

Policies

Course website

All course materials will be posted to MyCourses and all written assignments will be submitted via MyCourses. Grades will also be provided via MyCourses based on the standard McGill system of letter grades (see https://www.mcgill.ca/study/2023-2024/university_regulations_and_resources/undergraduate/gi_grading_and_grade_point_averages).

Email

While I will try to respond to all emails within 24 hours, I will **not** answer emails after 6pm or on Saturdays since I am trying to have a healthier relationship with work. Plan accordingly!

Office hours

You can reserve a twenty minute time slot to meet either on Zoom or in person during scheduled office hours, or if that time does not work for you, you are always welcome to email to arrange an alternative time. A sign-up sheet for office hours will be posted to MyCourses at the beginning of the semester.

Extraordinary Circumstances Statement

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.

Re-Grading

Students who wish to contest a grade for an assignment or exam must do so in writing (by email, sent to me) providing the reasoning behind their challenge to the grade received within two weeks of the day on which the assignments are returned. I will re-evaluate the assignment, but also reserve the right to **raise or lower the grade**. Please also see (http://www.mcgill.ca/politicalscience/files/politicalscience/assessment_and_re-read_policy_final.pdf).

Recordings

Recordings of class sessions will be made available on request for the benefit of students unable to attend class due to illness, required quarantine, or religious obligation. By staying in class and participating in in-class activities, you consent to being recorded. Recordings will be deleted at the end of term. **If you will need access to a recording you must ask in advance!**

Makeup work and late assignments

If you are unable to complete an assignment for documented emergency medical or family reasons, an extension or alternative can be arranged. Alternative arrangements are **only** open to those who can provide a valid medical/family reason in a timely fashion. Alternatives will not be arranged after deadlines have already passed.

Work that is submitted late **without** a documented medical or family reason will drop half a letter grade for each day past the deadline. But as long as the work is received before the grade deadline for instructors it will receive at least a passing grade.

Copyright of Lectures

All slides, video recordings, lecture notes, etc. remain the instructor's intellectual property. As such, you may use these only for your own learning (and research, with proper referencing/citation) ends. You are not permitted to disseminate or share these materials; doing so may violate the instructor's intellectual property rights and could be cause for disciplinary action.

I remind everyone of their responsibility in ensuring that all video and associated material are not reproduced or placed in the public domain. This means that each of you can use it for your educational (and research) purposes, but you

cannot allow others to use it, by putting it up on the Internet or by giving it or selling it to others who may also copy it and make it available. Please refer to McGill's Guidelines for Instructors and Students on Remote Teaching and Learning for further information.

McGill Policy on Academic Integrity

“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures” (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

Language of Submission

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Disabilities Policy

As the instructor of this course I endeavor to provide an inclusive learning environment. However, if you experience barriers to learning in this course, do not hesitate to discuss them with me and the Office for Students with Disabilities, 514-398-6009.

End of Course Evaluations

End-of-course evaluations are one of the ways that McGill works towards maintaining and improving the quality of courses and the student's learning experience. You will be notified by e-mail when the evaluations are available. Please note that a minimum number of responses must be received for results to be available to students.