International History

Academic year 2019-2020

Nationalism: A Global Career

HI111 - Spring - 6 ECTS
Mondays 8.15-10

Course Description

This seminar familiarizes students with theories and global histories of one of the most formidable forces in shaping our contemporary world: nationalism—a movement, principle, discourse, or ideology that after several decades of swan songs has recently witnessed a powerful resurgence. The course starts with an interdisciplinary introduction to the most common theoretical approaches to the study of nationalism. The longer second part enquires about the reasons behind the global spread of nationalism, discussing case studies from Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America since the early nineteenth century. We will also engage with recent revisionist approaches to the study of imperial decline and nation-state formation, which have stressed the unforeseeable and contingent nature of transitions from empire to nation, especially in the Habsburg and French colonial setting. The ultimate aim is to provide students with a firmer grasp of how manifold forms of nationalism have molded our contemporary world.

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Syllabus

Course Requirements

1. Term Paper: 50% of final grade; 4,000 words; deadline June 7 (by email to professor and TA)

Term papers of 4,000 words (including the footnotes, but excluding the bibliography) should deal with a clearly circumscribed historical topic and address a viable research question. Topic and question should be related to nationalism, be developed by the student, and discussed in advance with the instructor. For this purpose, students must submit a 300-word abstract by April 12, which states the title, topic, question, and structure of the future paper. This serves as a basis for discussion in the office hour.
Once you submitted your abstract please make an appointment here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ECmV28YZOkGQrTE6_UVThlx8Bmjlw2MfYvmGhN6Tzq4/edit#gid=0

For general reference of how to write term papers, please read the guidelines carefully. One session (March 9) will be devoted to academic writing. When in doubt you can also refer to this online guide for writing academic research papers: https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/index.html

2. Book Presentation and Review: 20% of final grade; 800–1,000 words; deadline Friday noon before class presentation. From the week-by-week list below you must choose one book to present in class and write a review of it. Book reviews are standalone pieces of 800–1,000 words, which should summarize the book’s content (ideally not on a chapter-by-chapter basis, but as a whole), approach, and main arguments in relation to the wider historiography of the relevant topic. They should also contain explicit praise and/or criticism. For reference, please read yourself through the book reviews of the American Historical Review as well as prior reviews of the book that you pick. The reviews must be submitted to all course participants by Friday noon before your presentation of the book. At the same time, students must make an appointment for the office hour to discuss their review.

The book presentation should be concise (7 minutes as an absolute maximum) and refrain from summarizing the book’s content once more, which through your written review will be known to all course participants before your presentation. Rather, it should relate the book’s arguments to the general required reading of the session in which you present the book. Does it support or complement the arguments made in the required reading? In what way? Does it shed a different light on them or contradict them? Your presentation should thus serve as an opener of the discussion rather than as a standalone review.

3. Class Participation: 30% of final grade

Just like an orchestra, a history seminar is only as good as the individual effort of all its participants. Please come to every class equipped with a thorough reading of the assigned texts, prepared answers to the questions that you find below for each session, as well as questions of your own. Make yourself heard in class and we will all benefit as a group.

Course Structure

The course begins with a short overview of the major competing theoretical paradigms in the study of nationalism (modernism and “primordialism”), as well as a discussion of Benedict Anderson’s classic Imagined Communities. Thereafter, we have some sessions about the relationship between nationalism and some other topic or approach (such as nationalism and sexuality, or nationalism and genocide), but for the most part the seminar will address the question of the global spread of nationalism and the nation-state: How did we get from a world dominated by empires about two hundred years ago to one dominated by nation-states today? How did nationalism travel? And above all, to what extent, or in what ways, was this a contingent process if looked at from a global angle? The seminar’s last block, consisting of three sessions dealing with the histories of imperial breakup and nation-state formation—here primarily on the basis of the Habsburg and French imperial examples.

As a whole, the seminar focuses on the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the main period during which nationalism spread globally. Although a significant part of the seminar deals with European examples, the course nonetheless seeks to overcome the Eurocentrism that has been typical of much theorizing about nationalism. Even as about half of the examples we will discuss refer to European history, cases drawn from Latin America, Asia, and Africa therefore also play a significant role.

Please read the topical introduction and the question for each week below and come to class prepared with an answer. In order to spread participation in our discussion, I will typically ask one student per week to offer their thoughts on these questions, so to kick-start our discussion. Some of the more topical weeks include the reading of different kinds of primary sources. This isn’t much work, but hopefully helps the discussion. So, please look at these sources with the question in mind of whether they support or contradict—or how they relate to—the main argument of the required reading in that week.
1. **February 17: Introduction**

Who are we? Distribution of presentations.

**Methods and Techniques:**

How to prepare and deliver a good presentation. The 5–7-minute rule, brevity, and precision.

2. **February 24: The Modernist Paradigm**

**Topic/Question:**

This session introduces us to the most widespread paradigm in the study of nationalism, usually referred to as “modernism.” Modernists like Gellner or Hobsbawm argue that nations were “invented” or made by nationalists. States, intellectuals, and the bourgeoisie typically play a crucial role in this history. It makes sense to start by reading the Breuilly text, which clearly lays out the field, and then follow with the short extracts by Gellner and Hobsbawm to give you a flavor of their writing. The main questions that will guide our discussion are: What conditions are necessary for the emergence of nationalism according to these authors? How does nationalism relate to nations and to nation-states in their view?

**Required Reading:**


3. **March 2: Primordialist Challenges**

**Topic/Question:**

This week we will look at the “primordialist” challenge to the modernist paradigm. Although, chronologically, primordialist approaches to nationalism preceded the modernist accounts, they have been slightly less dominant in history and the social sciences since the 1980s, especially outside of the narrower field of nationalism studies. Within this field, however, they have been important, especially in the relatively moderate form represented by Anthony Smith, which he himself designated “ethno-symbolism.” These authors typically stress the popularity of national feelings and the conditions on which nationalist ideologies succeed. Our main question is: What differentiates the arguments of these authors from those discussed in the previous week? And finally, please think about which side you find more convincing and why?

**Required Reading:**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


4. March 9: How to Write a Good Term Paper

Please read carefully the guidelines and come prepared to discuss specific matters that in your eyes arise from these guidelines.

5. March 16: Imagined Communities: Creole Pioneers?

**Topic/Question:**

Benedict Anderson’s book *Imagined Communities* is by far the most famous, and most cited account of what nationalism is and where it came from—often referred to beyond history, beyond the humanities, and even beyond academe. We will try to grasp the general outlines of Anderson’s argument by reading his very short introduction and the book’s table of contents (as well as the Wikipedia entry, if you like), but then home in on a less known aspect of the book: its locating of the origins of modern nationalism in eighteenth-century Spanish America—something that historians of Latin America found fascinating and helpful for their cause, but at the same time implausible in the light of Anderson’s broader argument and their own research. It is this central tension that will concern us in this session, based on Lomnitz’s discussion of nationalism in early nineteenth-century Mexico (and the source). Our main questions are thus: How persuasive is Anderson’s account of the “Creole pioneers” of nationalism when judged against evidence from early nineteenth-century Mexico? Does it make sense to treat these “Creole pioneers” as nationalists?

**Required Reading:**


**Source (also required):**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


**Methods and Techniques:**

Formulating good research questions


**Topic/Question:**

Theorists of nationalism have long distinguished between civic understandings of nationhood, which regulate access to the community on the basis of political, usually territorial, membership; and ethnic understandings of
nationhood, according to which someone belongs to the nation (or not) on the basis of descent. As exemplified in the classic book by Brubaker (see presentations below), the distinction maps onto different forms of awarding citizenship, such as France’s *jus soli* versus Germany’s *jus sanguinis*. Philosophers like Fichte, from whom we read a short extract, have often been treated as forerunners of ethnic nationalism. But does the distinction really make sense? This is our main question, for which we should first try to understand the dichotomy conceptually, before proceeding to debate the main readings, which both call its usefulness into question.

**Required Reading:**


**Source (also required):**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


7. **TBS: The Spread of Nationalism 1**

**Topic/Question:**

From this week on, we will focus particularly on the question of why nation-states became the predominant model of political communities across much of the world during the last two centuries. The article by Wimmer and Feinstein addresses this question of why directly, whereas Manu Goswami engages more specifically with the socio-economic conditions for the spread of nationalism that Benedict Anderson identifies, and the question of how this aspect of Anderson’s theory fits the non-European world. Our question will thus be twofold: Why, according to the articles, did the nation-state spread across the world? What specific problems arise from a diffusionist model in which nationalism originated in Europe and then engulfed the rest of the world?

**Required Reading:**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


8. April 6: The Spread of Nationalism 2

**Topic/Question:**

This session deals with the various historical waves, or “epidemics” in the language of David Armitage, in which new nation-states were founded across the world since the late eighteenth century. It makes sense to read Armitage first, then Manela, then the review of his book, which is essentially a long version of the article that we read here. Three main questions will guide our discussion: a) what accounts for the relative simultaneity, with which several nation-states were founded in successive waves? b) What are we to make of this simultaneity with a view to global history? c) On the basis of the examples of the readings, why did the nation-state appear to be an attractive option to the historical protagonists?

**Required Reading:**


**Source** (also required):


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


9. April 20: Nationalism, Ethnic Exclusion, and Genocide

**Topic/Question:**

This week and the next are a hiatus for our question about the global spread of nationalism. Instead, they address specific topics in their relationship with nationalism; this week ethnic exclusion and genocide. Ethnic nationalism is widely seen as a prerequisite for ethnic cleansing and genocide, a term that in Raphael Lemkin’s famous definition refers in itself to “a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.” Most events conventionally classified as genocides fit this bill—with one major exception on which we will focus: the Cambodian Genocide of the late 1970s, which perhaps did not primarily, or only, target any group defined in Lemkin’s sense (though it did also). Hence our question: Is it useful to understand the Cambodian Genocide as an instance of the history of nationalism? The book presentation on the Armenian Genocide will serve as a comparative example.

**Required Reading:**


Sources (also required):


Possible Presentations / Reviews:


Methods and Techniques: Finding and dealing with primary sources

10. April 27: Nationalism and Sexuality

Topic/Question:

Although today it is almost a cliché that nations are gendered, until the 1990s there was very little historical scholarship, beyond George Mosse’s book (see presentations) on the relationship between nationalism, gender, and sexuality—perhaps in part because this relationship has often been so variegated as to be difficult to pinpoint for a general theory. Here, we try to combine an attempt at sociologically typologizing this relationship with a concrete historical example (Kosovo in the 1980s and 90s). Our general question is: Why and how do issues of gender and sexuality become such an intrinsic part of nationalism?

Required Reading:


Sources (also required):


Read wikipedia article on Đorde Martinović: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki%C4%90or%C4%91e_Martinovi%C4%87

Have a look at the painting “Crucifixion of Djordje Martinovic” by Miodrag Mica Popovic on Google Images

Possible Presentations / Reviews:

George Mosse, Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe (New York, 1985).

Jacqueline Couti, Dangerous Creole Liaisons: Sexuality and Nationalism in French Caribbean Discourses from 1806 to 1897 (Liverpool : Liverpool University Press, 2016).
11. May 4: Nationalism and Empire 1

**Topic/Question:**

Our last three sessions concern the transition from multinational empires to nation-states, particularly in the twentieth century. In this week we look at this issue from a broad comparative angle, for which you should start by reading the review of the Berger/Miller volume by Roshwald and then dive into the two examples from that volume. The broad question that we will discuss in this week and the two following ones is quite how doomed empires were; or in more general terms still: Why did empires give way to nation-states and how contingent was that process? In addition, this week we will discuss what a comparative angle can bring to the table of this problem.

**Required Reading:**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**


Aviel Roshwald, *Ethnic Nationalism and the Fall of Empires: Central Europe, Russia, and the Middle East, 1914–1923* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

12. May 11: Nationalism and Empire 2

**Topic/Question:**

This session deals with the breakup of the Habsburg Empire in the wake of WWI. Once disparaged as a “prison of the peoples,” more recent historians, such as Pieter Judson, have issued the Habsburg Empire “a clean bill of health,” as Richard Evans remarks in a critical review of Judson’s last book. Starting from the two book presentations, we will discuss quite how widespread national feelings were in the late Habsburg Empire, how important these were for the political future of the empire, and what this means more broadly for the history of nationalism.

**Required Reading:**


Possible Presentations / Reviews:


13. May 18: Nationalism and Empire 3

**Topic/Question:**

Our last session addresses the breakup of the French Empire in the aftermath of WWII. Historians like Frederick Cooper have forcefully argued that this breakup, and the empire’s replacement with independent nation-states, should not be seen as foreordained—or even necessarily desirable. Drayton and Moyn disagree. What are the two sides’ arguments and which do you ultimately find more compelling?

**Required Reading:**


**Source** (also required):


Possible Presentations / Reviews:


14. May 25: A Nationalist Resurgence?

**Topic/Question:**

In our last meeting we will see how much of what we discussed in this seminar from a historical perspective is applicable or useful for understanding current international affairs, and in what way. We will do so by looking at several articles published in an issue of *Foreign Affairs* in 2019, entitled “The New Nationalism.” What are the main lines of agreement and disagreement among the authors here? What is “new” about the nationalism they describe, and what is not? Does the contemporary situation compel us to review our historical understanding of nationalism, and vice versa?
**Required Reading:**


**Possible Presentations / Reviews:**

