

Ethnicity and Nationalism in Central and Eastern Europe  
INTL/POLI 285-01  
Macalester College, Spring 2022  
4 credits; WA requirement

**Instructor:** Nadya Nedelsky

**Time:** T/Th 1:20-2:50

**Place:** Carnegie 404

**Office:** Carnegie 413

**Email:** nedelsky@macalester.edu (note: I may not check email on evenings and weekends)

**Office hours:** Tuesdays 11:30-12:30, Wednesdays 2:00-2:50, and by appointment (please use office hours link below my email signature to sign up, especially as sometimes the times will need to change )

Once thought to be a fading relic of more primitive times, ethnic nationalism has become one of this century's most powerful and divisive political forces. This course explores ethnic nationalism's development and consequences in one of the sites of its most prominent resurgence: the formerly communist states of Central and Eastern Europe. Drawing on contributions from a number of disciplines, we begin by examining the core concepts and theoretical approaches that define the study of nationalism and ethnic politics. Next, through documentaries and primary documents, we explore the region's history from the mid-nineteenth century period of "national awakening" until the end of the Communist period. We then use this theoretical and historical framework to explore the implications of Central and Eastern European nationalist movements for post-communist democratic state-building, minority inclusion, regional stability, and European integration. In this context, we explore the debate over the rights of minority cultures, which tend to be both the targets and sources of nationalist politics, asking whether North American and Western European approaches to the challenge of minority inclusion offer useful models for the European East. Finally, we explore our central issues in depth through a number of student-led case studies.

**Required Text:** Gale Stokes (ed.), *From Stalinism to Pluralism: A Documentary History of Eastern Europe Since 1945*, Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, January 1996. E-book and paper edition on reserve at the library.

Other readings available on Moodle.

**Assignments:**

Overview:

- Reaction paper and discussion question: 5% (discussion questions due by 5 pm the evening before we discuss the reading(s) on which you write)

- Classroom engagement: 15% (including class discussion contributions, country introduction presentation, audience member participation during final presentations)
- Thought paper: 10% (first version due February 15<sup>th</sup>; final version due March 1<sup>st</sup>)
- Theoretical paper: 15% (due March 10<sup>th</sup>)
- Weekly news journal: 5%
- Presentation: 15% (one class during Part 4 of the course)
- Role-playing presentations: 15% (you will do two of these during the second half of the class, each worth 7.5% of the grade)
- Research paper: 20% (due May 2<sup>nd</sup>)

Details (purposes + tasks):

## 1. Reaction paper and discussion question

- a. **Paper:** Each discussion-leader should prepare a 1-to-1.5-page, single-spaced reaction paper based on one of the readings (I will have you sign up for these). The **purpose** to allow you to deeply and critically engage with one reading. It helps you develop the skills of unpacking and evaluating the core elements of a text and its argument.

Prior to writing the paper, you should

1. watch the Voicethread (VT) on Unpacking an Argument, and
2. do one writing workshop of your choice (see menu on Moodle). Indicate which one you did in a footnote in the paper.

*Concisely*, the paper should cover the following:

- What is the author's core concern, and what is their main argument about it?
- What evidence does the author offer to support the argument?
- What are the central concepts [such as "the nation," "primordialism," "ethnicity," "pluralism," etc.] that sit at the heart of the argument? How is the author defining them? How do they relate to each other?
- In what significant ways does this text relate to prior readings for the course?
- What is your own evaluation of the text? You should devote at least one substantial paragraph to answering this question. For this, you may draw upon elements discussed within the Voicethread on Unpacking an Argument

The reaction paper itself is due at class time on the day we discuss your reading, via email or shared google doc. Worth 5% of the grade.

- b. **Pose a question:** Based on your reaction to the text, you should offer a question for class discussion relating to a specific quote from the reading. The **purpose** is to gain experience in crafting generative questions that facilitate class discussion,

which in turn furthers our understanding by bringing ideas into conversation. You should e-mail this to me by 5 pm the day before that class, so that I can potentially work them into the class design (we may not always get to them). The reaction paper itself is due in class on the day of your discussion-leadership.

Keep in mind that questions that generate good discussion should be open-ended (not answerable simply by yes or no), not just factual but rather interpretative/analytical, not requiring knowledge not covered in the course materials, and answerable, even if not conclusively. To check answerability, imagine someone asked YOU the question; would you know where to start? Does it involve too much that is unknowable?

2. **Classroom engagement** is worth 15% of the grade. This will involve a mix of full-class and small-group discussion in various formats. The **purposes** include exploring a diversity of perspectives and deepening both understanding of the issues at hand and communication skills by putting them into respectful conversation.

If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class, please meet with me and we can discuss ways to make this easier for you.

The engagement grade will also be based on:

- Country introduction presentations: on February 10<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, you will introduce to the class the country on which you are developing your expertise. Length will be fairly brief (TBD by size of class). Further instructions will be offered.
- Audience member participation during final presentations: be ready to offer questions and feedback
- Completion of writing workshops as assigned

3. **Thought paper**, the **purpose** of which is to sharpen argumentative writing and revision skills by writing a draft short paper, getting feedback, and then revising it.

Prior to writing the paper, you should complete the **writing workshop on revision** (ungraded, but counts toward participation)

In the 2-page (double-spaced) thought paper, you will respond to a prompt and short reading I provide and follow the format laid out in the prompt (separate). Please submit on Moodle, NOT as a PDF, so it's possible to comment on it.

I will comment on it and return it to you, providing you a basis for revisions. The first version is due February 15<sup>th</sup> and the final version is due March 1. Worth 10% of the grade.

- 4. Theoretical paper:** In this course, each student will develop an expertise on nationalism in one Central/East European country. The **purposes** of this paper are to help you develop knowledge of your country and to deepen your understanding of the three main theoretical approaches regarding the origins and nature of nations and nationalism.

Prior to writing this paper, do one writing workshop of your choice (see menu on Moodle).

Then, write a double-spaced, 4-5-page paper in which you categorize five texts on your country according to which theoretical approach the author uses (primordialism, constructivism, or ethno-symbolism).

The basic question you are answering is: what theoretical approach does author X apply in their text? And why am I categorizing it that way?

The perspectives lie on a spectrum and may, depending on the author, overlap in some points, so the author's approach may not fit neatly just within one theoretical "model"; if so, you can note this, with an explanation. You should support your categorizations with evidence from the texts and with reference to the theoretical texts on nationalism we read in the first weeks of the course.

At least three of the texts should be scholarly (peer-reviewed articles and book chapters; you may include the readings for your case assigned in this syllabus if they are useful) but may also include original source materials such as nationalist speeches/programs/political documents and/or media articles from your country that take a clear theoretical perspective.

Conclude with a brief discussion (at least one paragraph) of what your brief literature review tells us about the literature on your case and/or the nature of the nationalism there.

Worth 15%. Due March 10<sup>th</sup> by 5 pm on Moodle.

- 5. Weekly news journal:** the **purposes** are to expand your knowledge of your country by tracking current/recent events there, share this with the class, and gain a sense of interrelationships between cases and region-wide issues.

Beginning in the second week of class, you should start following the news in your country (various regional news digests are available online).

By **Wednesday** of each week, you should post a link to Moodle with a noteworthy news story from your country, accompanied by a 1-3 sentence summary of the highlights, a question or two that it raises for you, and a note shouting-out to any other Central/East European country mentioned in the article. Worth 5%.

- 6. Presentation:** You will give a ~15-minute presentation to the class on your case study during the second half of the course, on a day that we focus on your region. The **purposes** are to practice and strengthen communications skills, share knowledge and analysis, prompt discussion, and get feedback to improve the final paper. You should end with a question or two for the audience (this can be anything you're struggling with in the paper).

The presentation should take up these questions:

1. What nationalism-related issue in your country have you chosen to analyze, and what are its implications for political community, domestically and regionally?
2. What are the root causes of these issues, and which theory or theories best help us understand/explain them? How does your explanation relate to the broader literature on your case?
3. Based on your explanation, what responses are most promising? How feasible are they?

You should also offer the class a one-page handout (can be double-sided) on your case containing an outline of the presentation, highlighting key points.

Your presentation will also be preceded by a role-playing presentation (see below). After the presentation, we will open your topic for discussion, and you should be prepared to field questions on your research and conclusions. The presentation is worth 15% of the grade. Due on the date that we study your country.

You will also post some brief background to contextualize the debate over your issue – see 7 below.

- 7. Debate role-playing,** with the **purposes** of getting a sense of the emotionality of nationalist rhetoric; appreciating the competing claims in a conflict, which often involve deeply held convictions concerning issues of justice, fairness, the proper

foundations of community, and the purposes of good government; and practicing articulating a persuasive political argument, rather than a scholarly one.

On a revolving basis, a pair of students will play the role of one party in the key nationalism-related conflict discussed in another student's case study. You should present as strong a case as possible for the side in the conflict that you are representing. Though you should draw on available evidence, this should be an **argument** from a particular perspective rather than a report.

The conflict and the division of roles will be chosen in close consultation with the country-expert whose case study the debate relates to, and this expert should also thoroughly brief the presenters on the broader context of the situation. For this I would like you to meet with all three groups you're in (each presenter should take the lead in reaching out to their two debaters to arrange the meetings). This will end up being three meetings, with you leading one and getting instruction from the lead presenter in two others. Basically, each case study expert should explain the nationalist conflict to the debaters and consult on what the two contending claims/sides are. The debaters should then do independent research online to dig into what their side is arguing.

Each case study expert should then report to me via email what nationalist issue you'll be focusing on in your country by **February 18<sup>th</sup>**.

I will also be available for individual consultation or for any questions of any kind.

**The debate positions should be posted to Moodle no later than noon the day before the relevant country presentation.** The **case study expert** should also post some brief background reading(s) to contextualize the issue (can be news pieces – text or video – and should not take more than ~10 minutes to read/watch).

You should record your presentation via Voicethread or via Zoom. Each debater can do one separately, or you can do one together and go back and forth, interacting with and responding to each other.

Be persuasive – and this is not the time for scholarly distance from your topic! And be creative in who you choose to be in the debate (for ex, you can be an actual political leader, a prominent member of a minority community, etc).

The **audience's** job will be to watch or read the debate and then VOTE for which side they agree more strongly with. You will do this in a Moodle forum.

The role-playing presentations (each student will do two) are together worth 15% of the grade.

## 8. Final paper

Before writing, do one last writing workshop of your choice and post to Moodle.

You will write an 8-to-10-page paper (double-spaced, 12-point font, no larger than 1.5-inch margins) on your case study. This should integrate theoretical analysis with your empirical research. The paper will be comprised of an expanded and refined version of your presentation and should take into account any incisive or helpful comments you received after your presentation. A more detailed prompt will be provided.

There are good background scholarly sources available through the library and you can also incorporate the sources you used for the theoretical paper. The research into the current nationalist issue of your choice can be done via careful use of news sources and supporting academic analysis in scholarly sources (journals, books, etc.). Pay attention to where the information is coming from and never rely on just one source.

The final paper is due 5:00 pm on May 2<sup>nd</sup> by email or shared google doc. It is worth 20% of the grade.

**Please note:**

Unless you have talked with me before the due date – and I am understanding about extensions – **late papers** will be docked a grade per day. If you miss the day of your case study presentation without talking to me beforehand, barring extreme circumstances, you will receive a zero for that portion of the grade.

**Plagiarized work** will not be accepted. If you are using someone else’s ideas, words, or research, you **MUST** cite them properly.

Regular **attendance** is expected. You may have one free day (which cannot be the day of your presentation or when you are a discussant); if you have further unexcused absences, your participation grade will suffer.

**Grading scale:**

|           |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 100-94: A | 89-86: B+ | 79-76: C+ | 69-60: D  |
| 93-90: A- | 85-83: B  | 75-73: C  | 59-55: D- |
|           | 82-80: B- | 72-70: C- |           |

**Course schedule (subject to change if necessary)**

**Thurs Jan 20:** First day: welcome to the class!

- Before Jan 25<sup>th</sup> class, view Film *We Are All Neighbors* on Moodle

## **Part 1: Theory**

**Tues Jan 25:** Definitions, and Primordialist approaches

- Johann Gottfried von Herder, "Reflections on the Philosophy of the History of Mankind"
- Clifford Geertz, "Primordial and Civic Ties"
- Walker Connor, "Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond"
- Pierre van den Berghe, "A Socio-Biological Perspective"
- Nadya Nedelsky, "The Primordialist Approach" (very brief)

**Thurs Jan 27:** Modernist approaches

- Ernest Gellner, "Nationalism and High Cultures"
- Eric J. Hobsbawm, "Nationalism in the Late Twentieth Century"
- Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (excerpt)
- N. Nedelsky, "The Elite-Centered Approach" (very brief)

**Tues Feb 1:** Ethno-symbolist approaches

- John Hutchinson, "Nations and Culture"
- Anthony Smith, "Ethno-symbolism and the Study of Nationalism"
- N. Nedelsky, "The Ethnosymbolist Approach" (very brief)

**Thurs Feb 3:** The debate over the "civic" and "ethnic" models of nationhood and Academic writing workshop

- Michael Ignatieff, *Blood and Belonging* (excerpt)
- Bernard Yack, "The Myth of the Civic Nation"
- Richard A Lanham, "Who's Kicking Who?" and "Sentences and Shopping Bags," from *Revising Prose*

**Tues Feb 8:** Banal/everyday nationalism and the recent rise of illiberalism

- Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (excerpt)
- Rogers Brubaker, Margit Feischmidt, et al, *Nationalist Politics and Everyday Ethnicity in a Transylvanian Town* (excerpt)
- Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, *The Light That Failed: Why the West is Losing the Fight for Democracy* (excerpt)

**Thurs Feb 10:** Country info sessions, part 1

**Tues Feb 15:** Country intro sessions, part 2, and **thought paper first draft due**

## **Part 2: History**

**Thurs Feb 17:** The rise of nations, the fall of empires, and the interwar years

- Zsuzsa Csergö, Daina S. Eglitis, and Paula M. Pickering, "Central and East Europe: Turbulent Histories, Dramatic Transformations, and Twenty-first Century Challenges"
- Film: Eastern Europe: Political Powder Keg, Vol. 1, 1900-1939

**Tues Feb 22:** The interwar years, WWII, and the Communist takeover

- For background: Stokes pp. 10-12; 28; 43; 57; 66
- Gustavs Celmin, "A Latvian Latvia"
- Corneliu Codreanu, "The Resurrection of the Race"
- Ferenc Szálasi, "Hungarianism"
- Charles E. Bohlen, *The Yalta Negotiations*, in Stokes.
- Winston S. Churchill, *The Percentages Agreement*, in Stokes.
- Jakub Berman, "The Case for Stalinism," in Stokes.
- The Tito-Stalin Correspondence, in Stokes.

**Thurs Feb 24:** WWII and the Communist Years

- 1-page background on p. 80 in Stokes.
- "The Hungarian Revolution," in Stokes (p. 81).
- Imre Nagy, "Reform Communism," in Stokes.
- Milovan Djilas, "The New Class," in Stokes. (also brief intro to this on p. 100)
- Ludvík Vaculík, *Two Thousand Words to Workers, Farmers, Scientists, Artists, and Everyone*, in Stokes.
- Leonid Brezhnev, *The Brezhnev Doctrine*, in Stokes (start with p. 131)
- Milan Kundera, "A Nation Which Cannot Take Itself for Granted," in Stokes.
- Film: Eastern Europe: Political Powder Keg, Vol. 1, 1939-1953 (first half)

**Tues Mar 1:** The Communist Years, on film; **thought paper revision due**

- Film: Eastern Europe: Political Powder Keg, Vol. 2, 1939-1953 (second half)
- Film: Eastern Europe: Political Powder Keg, Vol. 3, 1953-1990

**Thurs Mar 3:** Communism's last 20 Years

- Milan Kundera, "The Tragedy of Central Europe," in Stokes.
- "Human Rights," in Stokes (p. 156)
- *The Helsinki Accords*, in Stokes.

- *Charter 77*, in Stokes.
- Sabine Rosenbladt, *Environmental Concerns in Poland*, in Stokes.
- Pope John Paul II, *Pope John Paul II Speaks in Victory Square, Warsaw*, in Stokes.
- Craig R. Whitney, David Binder, and Serge Schmemmann, "The Opening of the Berlin Wall," in Stokes.

### **Part 3: Post-communism/recent developments**

**Tues Mar 8:** An overview of the East European transitions, and the "return" to Europe(?)

- Václav Havel, "New Year's Day Speech, 1990," in Stokes.
- *The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia*, in Stokes.
- John Hutchinson, "Enduring Nations and the Illusions of European Integration"
- Ion Lancranjan, "Patriotism: A Vital Necessity," in Stokes.
- Stanko Todorov, "Name Changes in Bulgaria," in Stokes.
- Dimitrij Rupel, "The Slovene National Question," in Stokes.
- István Csurka, "A Few Thoughts," in Stokes.
- Zhelyu Zhelev, "Esteemed Compatriots," in Stokes.

**Thurs Mar 10:** Questions of membership, both internal (minorities) and external (EU), and regional consultation session; **theoretical paper due**

- Ronald Linden, "The EU and Its Newest Members: Forging Ties in Turbulent Times"
- Zsuzsa Csergo, *Talk of the Nation: Language and Conflict in Romania and Slovakia*, brief excerpt.
- OPTIONAL: Gareth Harding, "The Myth of Europe"

**March 12-20:** SPRING BREAK! ENJOY!

**Tues Mar 22:** Theorizing post-communist ethnic relations (this is a long reading – I will give you instructions on what to focus on)

- Will Kymlicka, "Western Political Theory and Ethnic Relations in Eastern Europe," in *Can Liberal Pluralism Be Exported?*

**Thurs Mar 24:** Commentaries on/responses to Kymlicka (we will divide these readings up into groups, each of which will be assigned two readings)

- Urszula Doroszewska, "Rethinking the State, Minorities, and National Security"
- Michael Walzer, "Nation-States and Immigrant Societies"
- Boris Tsilevich, "New Democracies in the Old World"
- Alexander Ossipov, "Some Doubts about 'Ethnocultural Justice'"

- Walter A. Kemp, “Applying the Nationality Principle with Care”
- Tibor Várady, “On the Chances of Ethnocultural Justice in East Central Europe”

**Part 4: Case studies and accompanying role-playing presentations** (exact cases and background readings TBA, depending on student choices)

**Tues Mar 29:** regional research consultation day

**Thurs Mar 31:** case studies: Baltics

**Tues Apr 5:** case studies: Central Europe

**Thurs Apr 7:** case studies: Central/Southeastern Europe

**Tues Apr 12:** case studies: Southeastern Europe/Balkans

**Thurs Apr 14:** case studies: Balkans/Post-Soviet states

**Tues Apr 19:** Post-Soviet states

**Thurs Apr 21:** question catch-up session

**Tues Apr 26:** comparative analysis

**Thurs Apr 28:** last day of class!

**Mon, May 2:** Final paper due via Moodle and in hard copy by 4 pm at the I.S. office