RPOS566: Ethnic Conflict
Fall 2013

Mark Baskin
RPOS 364
Monday, 5:45 – 8:35
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Course Objectives:
This course will survey diverse approaches to ethnic identity, ethnic conflict, and conflict mitigation and mediation. We will critically review the major academic and practical approaches to identity among conservatives, liberals, Marxists, and postmodernists. Our exploration of policy tools employed by government, international organizations and civil society to mitigate conflict, and to address intended and unintended consequences of policy will identify costs and benefits of varying approaches to ethnic conflict.

Aside from readings, presentations and class discussions, students will work together to address important issues. Students will complete a weekly blog of their readings and comment on each others’ blogs, as well. They will also complete a longer piece of research intended either for an academic or a policy audience. Students taking 566 as a readings course will not complete a research paper, but will design a piece of research intended to test a set of hypotheses or to explore different approaches to a policy problem.

Core Readings: Available at Mary Jane’s Books

- Donald L. Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict (University of California Press, 1985)
- Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism, 2nd ed. (Cornell U Press, 2008)
- Ashutosh Varshney, Ethnic Conflict and Civic Life, Hindus and Muslims in India (Yale University Press, 2002)
- Elizabeth Dauphinee, The Politics of Exile (Routledge, 2013)
- Assessments, articles and reports available on e-reserve via Blackboard:

Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>10%</th>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper or Design</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly blogs/comments</td>
<td>50%</td>
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Writing and Plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of another’s words or ideas without giving credit to that person. While this includes copying text word for word without the use of quotation marks, it also includes paraphrasing another person’s work without proper citation. Intellectual honesty is a core value of university and the foundation of faculty and student development. Students guilty of plagiarizing any material will receive a failing grade for the course and the evidence will be automatically turned over to the Office of Student Conduct.
During the first week of class, all students must review the UAlbany Library's tutorial on plagiarism entitled: Plagiarism 101 (http://library.albany.edu/usered/ncplaga/index.html). It is really far easier to do your own work than to plagiarize and students would be most unwise to consider it.

**Participation.** Class participation consists of preparation for and engagement in class discussion. It entails regular class attendance, completing assigned readings, participation in blogging and commenting on blogging, asking relevant questions, and taking positions on issues raised in the readings and in class.

**Written Assignment: Weekly Blog Entry.** Students will write a blog entry each week before each class session that addresses the assigned readings. It is to be between 300-500 words and it will explore aspects of ethnic conflict. The entry can react to the questions posed in the syllabus and or develop some other thinking. They should evaluate the arguments and methods of the readings in developing a broader ‘theory' or approach to developing ethnic conflict. Feel free to bring in materials not on the reading list—from academic journals, serious magazines (e.g., New Yorker, Foreign Affairs, Atlantic), fiction and/or other materials on specific cases that address issues of ethnic conflict in a serious manner.

**Research Paper/Research design:** Students taking the course for four credits will put together a research paper that includes an extensive review of literature and that works from an explicit policy and/or analytic framework. It will be discussed in detail during class.

**COURSE OUTLINE**

August 26: Introduction: What is Ethnic Conflict?

What does it mean to belong to an ethnic community? How is ethnicity salient in our private and public lives? Is it more significant in some places than others and if so what kind of places? How do ethnic conflict and nationalism go together?

- [http://www.pbs.org/pov/woainimommy/feeling_foreign.php#UhS7vrwYQ7C](http://www.pbs.org/pov/woainimommy/feeling_foreign.php#UhS7vrwYQ7C) -- **POV being forever foreign**

September 9: **Approach and Method.**
How can ethnic conflicts be best studied? What, in fact, are we studying: the development of ethnic groups, the causes of conflict, the mitigation of conflict? Are our goals to produce theory or to generate practical and applied insights that can contribute to conflict mitigation? How are the two objectives related? What types of arguments are best made? What level of analysis is best employed in approaching issues of ethnicity and ethnic conflict? What kind of insights can be generated from the following types of studies: history, case study, ethnography, Big-Data sets, Experiments?

- Joseph Stalin, Marxism and the National Question
  [http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm)

**Recommended Readings (on blackboard)**

- Training in Qualitative Research Methods: Building the Capacity of PVO, NGO, and MOH Partners
- Qualitative Research Methods, A Data Collector’s Field Guide

**September 16  The Modernity of Nationalism?**

Does nationalism create nations or do nations create nationalism? Are nations a modern phenomenon that permanently eliminates previous ‘thick ties’ to hearth and home? How are nations different from other groups, such as social class, the professoriate, professional associations, etc.? How can we study nations and nationalism comparatively? What are the key questions we would like to ask about nations that move beyond simple questions of policy? How have individual “nations” – e.g., the American nation, Serbians, Croatians, Indonesians, Russians, Ukrainians, etc. – evolved over time? Should we understand the term "nationalism" in a positive sense or does it point to retrograde, racist, and reactionary forces? What are the criteria that we can use to evaluate the emergence of nations and nationalism.


**September 23: Ethnicity as Primordial Identity**
What does it mean to have ‘ties that bind’? Has the time of primordialism come and gone? What are its claims about the relationship between personal ID, collective ID, and political action? Does it provide useful categories with which to understand the nature of conflict today? How can it be employed to make sense out of conflict? Are ties to some “nations” thicker than to others? Are these ties immutable in a manner that is biological? Are there principles along which we can develop principles that would enable the construction of a typology to include ‘race’, ‘ethnic group’, ‘political community’, ‘nationality’, ‘nation’, ‘religion’, ‘minority’ and other similar categories?


September 30: **Ethnicity as Constructed Identity I**

What is an ethnic group and how is ethnicity part of personal identity? How effectively do political leaders manipulate ethnicity and how effectively can ‘cultural entrepreneurs’ build ethnic identity? To what extent is ethnic identification situational and changeable according to context? How significant would this be politically? To what extent does it provide a basis for social, economic and/or political action? To what extent can ethnicity be said to be part of a set of affective ties that bind individuals and families together and to others? What unit of analysis is best employed in studying ‘ethnic groups”? What questions are best asked of ethnicity?

• Frederick Barth, “Introduction,” *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, -- blackboard

October 7: **Ethnicity as Constructed Identity II**

Is there a ‘there there’ in ethnic groups? How fluid are boundaries? How situational is the degree of identification with particular groups? How is ‘ethnicity’, ‘ethnic identity’ or ‘ethnic group’ useful in policy or research? Is it better to approach ‘ethnicity’ as an independent or dependent variable? To what extent is ethnicity an illusion or to what extent do constructivist approaches provide a firm handle on which to build a research agenda and to think about policy? Or does ethnicity, nationalism and patriotism serve to mask the material and political interests of different groups of elites?

• Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, chapters 3-6
• Kanchan Chandra, “Introduction” *Constructivist Theories of Ethnic Politics* (Oxford University Press, 2012), blackboard
• Farhat Shahzad, “Forging the Nation as an Imagined Community,” *Nations and Nationalism*, vol. 18, no. 1 (2012), pp. 21-38. blackboard

October 14: **Rational Approaches to Ethnicity**:

Might it be the case that “ethnic conflict” is actually the result, ultimately, of individually-based, value-maximizing behavior? Can “discrimination” against minorities be the result of innocent and no-discriminatory individual choice? Can it be that academics, policy makers and activists read more deeply into the meaning of “ethnicity” than ordinary people, who live according to a few rules that have little to do with cultural or social exclusivity? To what extent do alternative conceptualization and operationalization of variables change the outcomes with which we are comfortable?

October 21: **Ethnicity and Political and Social Institutions**

How effectively do political institutions help constrain ethnic conflict – or is a better question how do political institutions transform ethnic conflicts? Can parties, parliaments and non-governmental organizations help to mitigate the toxic dimensions of ethnic competition? Or, do these organizations help to harden the lines of conflict in a more zero-sum and toxic manner that inhibits the development of a broader political community that share some common values?

- Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, chapters 7-10

October 28: **Ethnic War**

Under what conditions to ethnically diverse societies break down into armed conflict? What steps can be taken to limit the spiral to armed conflict? How do stable multi-ethnic social systems break down into war? Are there steps that can be taken to limit the scope of the conflict? Is it possible to make sacred conflicts more tractable? Do all ‘ethnic wars’ necessarily involve ethnic cleansing and genocide?

- Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, Chapters 11-13
• Scott Atran, Robert Axelrod, Richard Davis, “Reframing Sacred Values” blackboard
• On preventive diplomacy – blackboard
• On genocide -- blackboard

**November 4: Ethnic War**

What is the relationship between individuals who are fighting wars and academics who are studying ethnic war? Can an ‘outsider’ ever really go through the many layers of social and cultural life in ethnically war-torn societies to make sense of the conflict and make a contribution to building a stable and democratic society? Or is this a liberal (or constructivist) illusion? How legitimate is an academic contribution without footnotes and told as a novel?

• Elizabette Dauphinee, *The Politics of Exile* whole book

**November 11 Conflict Resolution II Getting to Yes, Getting to No**

Is it the case that only partition can end some conflicts if there is to be a lasting peace? To what extent are the ‘new wars’ that are rooted in ethnicity, identity and various sacred roots resolvable by recreating a political community that has been rent asunder by the conflict? Or are some conflicts so absolutely violent that it is not possible “to put Humpty together again”?

• Chaim Kaufman, “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars,” *International Security*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1996), pp. 136-175 – blackboard – and follow the commentary on this influential (in policy circles) article

**November 18: Power-Sharing vs. Power Dividing:**

What institutional and political mechanisms can help to create an environment that would inhibit ethnic conflict from breaking out again? To what extent is power sharing – consociationalism being the most well-known modern version – a basis on which to build a peaceful and stable society at the end of conflicts? Is it possible that institutional arrangements that lead to power sharing actually hardens the cleavages and strengthens prospects for conflict.
• Arend Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies* - blackboard
• Donald Horowitz, Ethnic Groups in Conflict, chapters 14-16, afterward
• John Nagle and Mary-Alice C. Clancy, “Constructing a Shared Public Identity in Ethno-nationally Divided Societies; comparing Consociational and Transformationist Perspectives,” *Nations and Nationalism*, vol 19, no. 1 (2012), pp. 78-97. – blackboard (follow the debate begun by this article)

November 25: **Civil society**

Is ethnic violence local? To what extent does the structure of civic life help to mitigate against the outbreak of ethnic violence? How effective are formal and informal civic networks within and among diverse ethnic groups in preventing and mitigating conflict? Does Varshney provide an effective strategy to study the problem of ethnic conflict that both leads to greater insight and to good policy? Is it possible that a rich and diverse civil society can actually enhance ethnic conflict?


December 2 **Can Donors and Multi-lateral Organizations Build Inter-Ethnic Peace?**

How effectively have external actors provided mechanisms that would lead to justice and to stable and inclusive governments in societies that can develop self-sustaining methods to mitigate conflict and build peace? What approaches to conflict mitigation are employed by different types of donors, such as national aid agencies, multilateral organization, and international financial institutions? How does practice deviate from ‘theory’ in these approaches? How can we best evaluate the utility of different approaches to these efforts?

• Boutros Boutros Ghali, An Agenda for Peace - blackboard
• Report on the Panel on UN Peacekeeping - blackboard
• “Why Should I Be a Minority in Your State when you can be a minority in mine?” - blackboard
• Material on Truth Commissions and on criminal tribunals - blackboard

December 9 **Conclusions: Steps in theory, research and policy?**

• Presentation of Student Papers
• Some final thoughts about individual identity, group conflict and efforts to build peace.