Political Science 73: Special Topics
The Psychological Constructions and Politics of Ethnoconflict
Tuesday 1-4pm

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Office: 610-690-6866
Hours: T/R 11:30-12:15 W 1-3

This course will examine the complex and troubling origins of a series of conflicts often defined as ethnic in nature. Students will explore alternate discussions of the character of each conflict, including economic and psychoanalytic explanations. In addition students will explore the processes by which enemies are identified and maintained; how collectivities define their membership, and whether reconciliation is possible. Cases include the Former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Chechnya and Cyprus.

The course will be presented in a fashion similar to the traditional seminars here at Swarthmore. Students will be expected to participate in discussions and have completed the requisite readings for each week. Each student will be responsible for leading the discussion and presenting a paper commenting on that week’s reading three times during the course of the semester. Students will have the opportunity to revise one of those three papers as a final work product for the course. Each week, those students not presenting will be required to write a two page “reaction” to the week’s readings. There will be a Blackboard site associated with the course. Hopefully students will not only post their reactions early on the discussion board, but comment on other’s comments.

The following books will be available for purchase. Readings noted as “Documents” on the syllabus will be available on the Blackboard site.

Reading List:


Schedule of Topics and Readings:

PART I: Establishing the Ethnic Community

Week One: A Clash Of Civilizations: Ethnic Conflict and Seeing the Other

August 30

Readings: A Clash of Civilizations and Remaking the World Order, Huntington, Samuel (Simon and Shuster, 1998) entire?

Questions: What is an ethnic conflict? Is it one thing? Can we characterize different conflicts as being ethnic or not? This first week looks at some of the bases for conflict. Lijphart explores a series of explanations for decreases in ethnic conflict in Europe. Huntington, on the other hand, offers an explanation for the seeming explosion of ethnic conflicts after the end of the Cold War. What do these two authors have to say to each other? How useful are these perspectives in explaining your own understanding of ethnic conflict?
**Week Two: Building Ethnic Communities: Building Nations**

September 7

Readings:  
Nations and Nationalism, Gellner, Ernest (Cornell University Press, 1983)  
The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism, Smith, Anthony (Brandeis University Press. 2000)  
Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe, Miroslav Hroch, (Columbia 2000), Chapters 1-7, 16-18  

Questions: Do ethnic communities just exist or are they created, and if they are created, how, why, and under what circumstances? This week’s readings explore the formulation and formation of ethnic communities; they also explore the distinctions between ethnic communities and nations. What are the necessary conditions for a nation to form? Is there a specific sequence of identity formation that leads from clan to ethnie to nation? What are the relationships between identity formation, nation building and capitalism?

**Week Three: Identity, Psychology, and the Creation of Self-Identity**

September 14

Readings:  
The Need to Have Enemies and Allies: From Clinical Practice to International Relationships, Volkan, Vamik, (Jason Aronson, 1994)  

Questions: If nations or ethnies are “imagined communities” how do they affect our consciousness? Is identity belonging? Why do we need to belong to something larger than ourselves? This week’s readings explore the psychological aspects of nation, ethnie and community. These readings explore how identities are established in the praxis of belonging, to use John Borneman’s phase. Can we use the psychoanalytic to explain the formation of such communities? How do you assess the explanatory power of this tool of analysis?
PART II: The End of Yugoslavia

Week Four: Ethnic Conflict as Economic Resource Competition
September 21

Readings:
“A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation Across Ethnic Terrain”
The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism and War in the Balkans,
Aleksandar Pavković (St. Martin’s Press, 2000) Chapters 1-8, pp. 1-124
“Some Causes of Political Change in Modern Yugoslavia, Bridge, Susan in
Ethnic Conflict in the Western World, Esman, Milton, ed., (Cornell University
“Opposition as a Component of Ethnic Self-Consciousness” Porshnev, B.F., in
Ethnicity and Resource Competition in Plural Societies, Despres, Leo A., ed.,
(Mouton Publisher, 1975) Document #9.

Questions:
Much of the media presentations of the Bosnian and Kosovar Wars accepted
ethnicity as an essentialized identity. Brackette Williams offers an alternative
construction of ethnicity: groups involved in resource competitions. What
resources were at stake at the outset of the Yugoslav Wars? What precipitated
the conflict? Were the media correct in asserting that Croats will always be
Croats and probably always hate Serbs?

Week Five: The Collapse of Yugoslavia and the War in Bosnia-Herzegovina
September 28

Readings:
The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia: Nationalism and War in the Balkans,
125-210 (Chapter 12 for next week)
“Bosnia: Of Myths and Maps” in From Culture to Ethnicity to Conflict: An
Anthropological Perspective on International Ethnic Conflict, Eller, Jack David,
(University of Michigan Press, 1999) Chapter 6, pp. 243-296, Document #10
The War in Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ethnic Conflict and International Intervention,
Burg, Steven and Paul Shoup, (M.E. Sharpe, 2000), Chapters 3 & 4 pp. 62-188,
Documents #11 & 12.

Questions:
How did events in Bosnia differ from those in Slovenia or Croatia? What made
circumstances in Bosnia so violent? Was Bosnia different from other republics in
Yugoslavia? How was history utilized to mobilize mass action? Was there a
particular stratum which was most readily mobilized? If so, why was it so ready
for action? How did the peace accords affect patterns of ethnic identification?
Nearly ten years after the peace settlement what do you believe will happen in
Bosnia?
**Week Six:** Where it Began and Where it Ended: Kosovo and the Collapse of Yugoslavia

October 5

**Readings:**
- Kosovo: War and Revenge, Judah, Tim (Yale University Press, 2000)

**Questions:**
- Compare Bosnia and Kosovo. How was Kosovo different from Bosnia? What resources might be at stake in Kosovo? Who wanted what in Kosovo, and how did that differ from events or desires expressed in Bosnia? Can a multi-ethnic society be rebuilt in Kosovo?

**Week Seven:** Spring Break

October 12

**Readings:**
- Go read something peaceful and relaxing

**PART III: Overcoming Colonial Legacies through Genocide?**

**Week Eight:** Monsters and Everyday People

October 19

**Readings:**

**Questions:**
- Who are killers? What does it take to transform someone from everyday citizen to killer? Can everyone kill? What stops people from engaging in violence? What are the most important lessons to be learned from the Goldhagen text? How should participants in killings be dealt with in society? Are people who participate in ethnic violence evil?

**Week Nine:** A Project of Murder in Rwanda

October 26

**Readings:**
Questions: What is the relationship between clan identity and ethnic identity? What impact does the colonial legacy have on Rwanda? How is ethnicity different in Rwanda from Bosnia or Kosovo? How is it the same? Who were the perpetrators of violence in Rwanda? Why was the violence so extensive? Were the perpetrators evil?

**Week Ten:** *Sorting Out the Dead: Tribunals and Trials in Rwanda*

November 2 (DO NOT FORGET TO VOTE!)


Questions: Are tribunals and truth commissions effective in dealing with the aftermath of ethnic violence? What are the main purposes of such bodies? Should they mete out punishment? Should they be able to mete out capital punishment? What is the difference between a Truth and Reconciliation commission and a tribunal? Are there circumstances when one body is more appropriate than the other?

**PART IV: Ethnic Conflict, States and Terrorism**

**Week Eleven:** *Islam, Post-Coloniality and Identity*

November 9


Questions: What is the relationship between religion and ethnicity? Is religious violence different from ethnic violence? What is special about Islam? Is Islam special? What are the goals of political Islam? Who find these goals attractive? What are the major tenants of Political Islam? Is there only one political Islam?

**Week Twelve:** *Ethnic Politics or Ethnic Terrorism*

November 16

**Questions:** What is the relationship between the political struggle and violence in Chechnya and Islam? Is this a religious war? What are the Goals of the Chechens? What resources are at stake? Is the situation in Chechnya more similar to Rwanda, Bosnia or Kosovo, or is it completely different? What sparked the violence in Chechnya? Are the Chechen rebels terrorists?

**Week Thirteen: Chechnya’s Impact Upon Russia: Excuse for the Abuse of Power?**
November 23


**Questions:** Who benefits from the war in Chechnya? Why did Russia invade a second time? How does Russian identity gain from the war in Chechnya? What makes a Russian? Why do the Russians consider the Chechen rebels terrorists? Did this week’s readings change your mind from last week?

**Week Fourteen: Resolution or Unresolvable?**
November 30

**Readings:** The Broken Olive Branch: Nationalism and the Cyprus Problem, Anastasiou, Harry (Ooligan Press, 2004)


**Questions:** What can we learn from the experiences on Cyprus? Do you believe the situation is resolvable? What impact does European Union membership have on the ethnic tensions in Cyprus? Does EU membership create resource competition or ameliorate it? Can the lessons of Cyprus be applied to other conflicts? How would they be applied to the other case from the semester?

**Week Fifteen: When do Violent Politics Become Genocide?**
December 7
Final Discussions, predictions, reflections, dinner, wine ….