ICIR 327 Ethnicity and Representation in International Affairs

Course Description & Aims
This course provides advanced perspectives for students to explore, analyze and critically evaluate issues of ethnicity and representation in international affairs, including identity politics, problems of prejudice and discrimination, as well as the situation of ethnic minorities in the contemporary world, their struggle for survival, self-determination and legal recognition. Different identity markers, such as kinship, language and religion are critically discussed in relation to identity formation, both in historical and theoretical perspectives. Special attention will be given to recent debates about religion as a transnational identity and, in this context, representations of Islam and the ‘Muslim world’. Another focus of class discussions concerns the situation indigenous peoples in the international legal system and the question of culture and identity as an (economic) commodity.

The concept of ethnicity; ethnic labeling and identity; the concept of race; minority groups, wider society, and the state; acceptance, prejudice and discrimination; economic, political, and socio-cultural aspects of ethnicity; ethnic conflicts; ethnic cleansing and genocide. Students will explain; discuss; evaluate the relationship of ethnicity; the state; in international affairs.

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Assessment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Class Participation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation of Reading Assignment</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Debates</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Project: (a) Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) Final Essay Paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Course Learning Outcomes
At the completion of the course the student will be able to:

1. Differentiate socio-cultural and legal aspects in the conceptualization of ethnicity and identity
2. Apply a range of theoretical perspectives as well as international legal frameworks to the current situation of ethnic minorities and be able to critically discuss and evaluate them
3. Explain, interrelate and interpret the situation of minority groups in a global comparative perspective
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic No.</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1        | Introduction and Course Organization  
Ethnicity and Race: “Perilous Ideas”? |
| 2        | Concepts of Kinship  
Kinship and Belonging: Selected Case Studies |
| 3        | Theoretical Perspectives: Essentialism and Perennialism  
Constructivism and beyond |
| 4        | Historical Perspectives: Ethnicity and Representation in the Colonial Age  
Identity Politics and Social Change after Colonialism |
| 5        | Religion in the Making of Ethnicity  
Religion as Transnational Identity |
| 6        | Ethnicizing Islam – and ‘Islamizing’ Europe?  
Case Study: Group Discussion on the ‘Islamic Headscarf’ |
| 7        | Midterm Review  
Workshop |
| 8        | Indigenous Peoples and International Law  
Self-determination and Territoriality beyond State Borders |
| 9        | “Ethnicity, Inc.”: Identity and Culture as a Commodity  
Can Culture be Copyrighted? |
| 10       | ‘Multiculturalism’ and the Future of Ethnicity  
Case Study: Group Discussion on nationalism(s) |
| 11       | Case Studies I: Student Presentations  
Case Studies II: Student Presentations |
| 12       | Case Studies III: Student Presentations  
Final Discussion |

**Assessment Methods and Criteria**

1. **Active Class Participation** [10 %]. – Students are expected to actively and regularly take part in class discussions. It is important to keep up with the reading materials in order to be able do so. Core readings are clearly indicated (in **bold** letters) in the detailed lecture schedule at the end of this syllabus, all others are further reading suggestions. Relevant readings will be made available to students electronically and/or in form of a study pack.

2. **Presentation of Reading Assignment** [20 %]. – Each student enrolled in this course will have to prepare a presentation of one of the core readings (indicated in **bold** letters). The presentation should last no more than 10 minutes. A sign-up sheet for the presentation of readings will be circulated in the first week of classes. The presentations of reading materials must (a) briefly summarize the main arguments of the presented text, (b) point out problematic or questionable sections of the reading, and (c) provide 2-3 questions for further in-class discussion in relation to the presented materials. It is expected that each reading presentation be accompanied by a one-page outline that must be distributed in class; PowerPoint may be used to aid the presentations, although this is not mandatory.

3. **Group Debates** [20 %]. – At two occasions (during Week 6 and 10), students will be divided into two groups and asked to discuss a given topic from different angles. Groups will be given 30 minutes to develop arguments for their respective positions. Afterwards both groups are discussing the merits and limitations of their contrasting positions with each other. During each group debate, students can accumulate up to 10 points. The level of participation and the quality of contributions to these debates – both during the preparation in small groups and during the open-floor debate – will be assessed based on the frequency and quality of individual contributions, as well as students’ ability to engage in team-work.
4. Case Study Project [20 + 30 %]. – A large portion of marks will be awarded to students’ case study projects, which consist of a presentation (in Week 11/12) and a final essay paper (of 3000-4000 words, due at the end of Week 13). In their final projects, students will have to discuss a course-related topic of their choice in comparative theoretical and/or historical perspective. A list of topic suggestions will be provided in class (during the workshop in Week 7) and the instructor will give advice to students who struggle to narrow-down their interests. Both the presentation and the final essay paper must include the following aspects: (1) a brief introduction of the chosen topic, including a more descriptive section regarding background and context of the case study, (2) an analysis and discussion of relevant aspects of the case study in relation to theories and debates introduced in class, and (3) a critical reflection of identity issues in relation to global affairs as well as legal and political aspects of the international system. Presentations and essays need to be clearly structured and argumentative.

Introduction

Topic description: What is ‘identity’? After a general introduction into course contents, the weekly schedule and the course requirements, we will discuss foundational aspects of identity, ethnicity and race, highlighting the ‘perils’ of such concepts based on a critical reflection piece of anthropologist Eric Wolf.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will develop an awareness regarding foundational terms in relation to identity formation and engage with critical perspectives.
- Students will begin to interrogate general assumptions about identity formation and develop a foundational framework of related questions and issues.

Activity:
- In a plenary debate students are asked to brainstorm the conceptual meaning and differences of the terms “identity”, “ethnicity” and “race” and to suggest possible definitions for these terms.

Readings:
- Eric Wolf: “Perilous Ideas: Race, Culture, People” [and Comments and Reply], Current Anthropology 35(1) [1994]: 1-12.

Kinship and Belonging

Topic description: What is the role of kinship in formulating (ethnic) identities? And what exactly is ‘kinship’? Based on an introduction of classical ideas regarding kinship and belonging we will develop an understanding of diverse systems of kinship recognition and its contribution to identity formulation. The volatile nature of different frameworks of kin recognition and the role of intermarriage and descent will be highlighted in order to develop a critical understanding of both individual and cultural (group-)choices of belonging, recognition and representation of identity and identification. After introducing more theoretical and systematic aspects of the study and classification of kinship, selected case studies will be discussed in the second session of this week to illustrate aspects of “fixity and flux”, “becoming and unbecoming”, and “ethnic switching”.

Expected learning outcomes:
- Students will explore and understand foundational concepts of kinship and kin recognition in relation to identity formation.
- Students will develop awareness for the complexities of kinship recognition and explain and discuss aspects of its volatile nature based on selected case studies.
Activities:

- Students assemble in small groups to brainstorm and discuss identity markers based on their own individual backgrounds. Which aspects of identity and family heritage are most prevalent amongst individual group members? What are the reasons for this? Are there discernable patterns? Suggestions and findings from the group discussions are then related to theories of identity, kinship and belonging in a following plenary session.
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.

Readings:

  
  Chapter 7: “Kinship and Descent” (pp. 100-115)
  Chapter 8: “Marriage and Relatedness” (pp. 116-131)


**Ethnicity and Social Theory**

**Topic description:** A number of academic disciplines in the social sciences have contributed to the formulation of theories regarding ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nationalism’, ranging from political and historical science to anthropology and sociology. Many of these theoretical perspectives have been cross-fertilizing broader academic debates, which are the focus of class discussions this week. Making use of selected sections of classical studies, first, some foundational theories will be discussed that tend to regard ethnic identity as a perennial issue based on essentialist features such as kinship, race and language. Departing from there we will engage with theoretical advances towards a more constructivist and instrumentalist understanding of ethnicity and belonging that focusses on the historical and political context for the generation and formulation of ethnic identity and identification.

**Expected learning outcomes:**

- Students will explore a range of theories in regard to ethnicity and identity.
- Students will understand and be able to explain differences of essentialist and perennialist approaches in comparison to the advances of constructivism and instrumentalism.
- Students will begin to critically discuss the distinctions of theories about ethnicity and identity and their relevance for a political economy of identity and identification.

**Activities:**

- Students assemble in small groups to critically discuss selected excerpts of classical theories on ethnicity. The groups’ findings and suggestions are then related, compared and synthesized in a plenary debate.
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.
Readings:
- John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.): *Ethnicity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 [Oxford Readers]. – In particular the following brief sections:
  - Chapter 3: Manning Nash, ‘The Core Elements of Ethnicity’ (pp. 24-28)
  - Chapter 5: Max Weber, ‘The Origins of Ethnic Groups’ (pp. 36-39)
  - Chapter 6: Clifford Geertz, ‘Primordial Ties’ (pp. 40-45)
  - Chapter 7: Jack Eller and Reed Coughlan, ‘The Poverty of Primordialism’ (pp. 45-51)
  - Chapter 12: Fredrik Barth, ‘Ethnic Groups and Boundaries’ (pp. 75-82)
  - Chapter 13: Abner Cohen, ‘Ethnicity and Politics’ (pp. 83-84)
  - Chapter 14: Paul R. Brass, ‘Ethnic Groups and Ethnic Identity Formation’ (pp. 85-90)

**Ethnicity in the Making: Historical Perspective’s**

**Topic description:** Having introduced and discussed foundational theoretical perspectives in the study of ethnicity and identity in the previous week, we now turn to a critical review of global historical developments and their contribution to identity formulation and ethnic classification, particularly the effects of colonialism for “identity work” in “imagined communities”. Based on an outline of the generally historical character of group identities, our class discussions will focus on the colonial project of ethnic classification within the context of hegemonic politics of “divide and rule” (*divide and impera*) and explore its effects towards nationalist agendas and identity politics in the postcolonial era.

**Expected learning outcomes:**
- Students will understand and explain ethnic identity formation in historical perspective.
- Students will explore the effects of colonialism towards identity formation and ethnic classification.
- Students will begin to critically discuss colonial legacies for contemporary identity politics in comparative perspective.

**Activities:**
- Students assemble in small groups to critically discuss selected excerpts of some classical historical approaches to ethnicity and ethnogenesis. The groups’ findings and suggestions are then related, compared and synthesized in a plenary debate.
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.

**Readings:**
- John Hutchinson and Anthony D. Smith (eds.): *Ethnicity*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 [Oxford Readers]. – In particular the following brief sections:
  - Chapter 17: William H. McNeill, ‘Pre-modern Polyethnicity and Ethnic Homogeneity’ (pp. 107-111)
  - Chapter 21: Robert Bartlett, ‘Language and Ethnicity in Medieval Europe’ (pp. 127-132)
  - Chapter 23: Daniel Bell, ‘Ethnicity and Social Change’ (pp. 138-146)
  - Chapter 27: Étienne Balibar, ‘Fictive Ethnicity and Ideal Nation’ (pp. 164-168)
  - Chapter 29: Bassam Tibi, ‘Old Tribes and Imposed Nation-States in the Middle East’ (pp. 174-179)
Religion, Ethnicity and Identity

**Topic description:** The first focus-cluster (two weeks) of this course concerns the relationship of religion, ethnicity and identity. Is religion foundational in the generation of ethnicity? Or is religion a quasi-ethnic formula in itself, maybe of a transnational nature? During this week we are going to initiate discussions on the ‘ethnic’ character of religion and the religious foundations of ethnic identity. We also contrast and compare the two to discuss if either one can be regarded as more or less fundamental for the formulation of identities – and as a source of socio-political mobilization.

**Expected learning outcomes:**
- Students will explore the relationship between ethnicity and religion.
- Students will compare and contrast the role of religion and ethnicity in the formulation of identity.
- Students will reflect about the impact of religious identities towards socio-political mobilization.

**Activity:**
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.

**Readings:**
  - Chapter 32: Cynthia Enloe, ‘Religion and Ethnicity’ (pp. 197-202)
- Fenggang Yang and Helen Rose Ebaugh: “Religion and Ethnicity Among New Immigrants: The Impact of Majority/Minority Status in Home and Host Countries”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40(3) [2001]: 367-378

Ethnicity, Migration and the “Islamization of Europe”

**Topic description:** Departing from the more general discussions on the relationship of ethnicity and religion in the formulation of identities we engage with some contentious case study material regarding the position of Islam in the field of identity politics. To what extent can Islam be seen as a transnational identity marker that transcends ethnicities? And in contrast: in which ways is Islam itself strongly attached to (Middle Eastern) ethnicities that could be seen as responsible for its perceived conservative character? Is “liberal Islam” then the product of a de-ethnicized version of the religion, or does – to the contrary – the deculturation of Islam produce forms of religious fundamentalism? We are going to critically discuss these and related issues vis-à-vis debates about the “Islamic head-scarve” in contemporary Europe.

**Activities:**
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.
- Students will be split into two groups to discuss recent debates about banning Islamic head-scarves in Europe – with one group advocating the position that the deculturation of Islam
should produce a more liberal, “Western” version of the religion that is less prone to fundamentalism and radicalization and more in line with the secularized traditions of European identity. In contrast to this, the other group’s role is to defend the freedom of religious practice (including the public display of religious symbols) based on the conviction that a culturally rooted version of Islam is actually producing the opportunity for inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue and in consequence can avoid religious radicalization based on a strong and secure identity. – Note that students’ participation and performance in this group debate is part of the assessment for this course (10 %).

Expected learning outcomes:

- Students will compare and contrast different perspectives towards Islamic identity in relation to ethno-cultural issues.
- Students will develop a critical and differentiated understanding of the role of Islam in contemporary Europe and related recent debates.
- Students will critically discuss different perceptions of inculturation and deculturation in regard to contemporary European Islam.

Readings:

- Sara Silvestri: “Islam and Religion in the EU Political System”, West European Politics 32(67) [2009]: 1212-1239.

Midterm Review and Workshop

Topic description: During the midterm-review week, materials of the first part of the course will be synthesized and comprehensively reviewed, followed by a workshop on case study preparation in the second session of the week. The workshop will introduce students to potential case study topics for their individual term projects and assist them in allocating relevant materials. The assessment criteria for the presentation and the final essay paper will be introduced and discussed and practical suggestions will be given to students in regard to their case study preparation.

Activity:

- Interactive workshop to assist students’ case study preparation.
Indigenous People and International Law

**Topic description:** The second focus-cluster (two weeks) of this course concerns the situation of indigenous peoples in the contemporary world. During week 8, contending concepts of indigeneity will be introduced and discussed, with a particular focus on the perception of indigenous peoples as it has become commonly used in international legal discourses. The relevant international legal frameworks – from the ILO Convention No. 169 to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – will be introduced and critically assessed. Issues of territorality and self-determination will be discussed – including both indigenous groups within the boundaries of nation states as well as those that transcend the borders of recognized states (e.g. arctic peoples or Southeast Asian sea nomads).

**Expected learning outcomes:**
- Students will understand and critically assess contending perceptions of indigeneity.
- Students will explore and understand issues relating to indigenous peoples’ rights in the international legal system.
- Students will develop a critical and differentiated understanding of the significance of territorality and self-determination for the experience of indigenous groups in the contemporary world.

**Activities:**
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.
- Students assemble in small groups to discuss selected passages of the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* in order to prepare a plenary discussion of the document.

**Readings:**
- John R. Bowen: “Should We Have a Universal Concept of 'Indigenous Peoples' Rights'?: Ethnicity and Essentialism in the Twenty-First Century”, *Anthropology Today* 16(4) [2000]: 12-16.
- Selected case study readings on arctic peoples and Southeast Asian sea nomads.
Culture as a Commodity

**Topic description:** What is the relationship between individual and communal rights claims in the context of intellectual property, knowledge and culture? In order to focus upon selected challenges towards indigenous peoples’ rights in the contemporary world, this week we are discussing issues of commodification and intellectual ownership – a topic that has increasingly gained broader attention due to developments on the global scale, from the use of indigenous knowledge in development projects towards the infringement of cultural property rights (and religious sensibilities) in marketing ‘ethnic’ culture in the music and arts industries. In a distinct line of development, indigenous groups themselves have begun to commodify cultural items, sometimes with contradicting claims. We are critically discussing related issues and the resulting perception of “Indigenous People Incorporated” (Shane Greene), or “Ethnicity, Inc.” (John L. and Jean Comaroff).

**Expected learning outcomes:**
- Students will explore the relationship between individual and communal rights in the context of intellectual property, knowledge and culture.
- Students will develop a systematic and differentiated understanding of cultural commodification in relation to communal identities.
- Students will continue to critically discuss a diverse range of challenges towards indigenous peoples’ rights under the normative international system.

**Activity:**
- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.

**Readings:**
  - Chapter 9: ‘The Expansion and Restructuring of Intellectual Property and Its Implications for the Developing World’ (pp. 167-199)
- Shane Greene: “Indigenous People Incorporated? Culture as Politics, Culture as Property in Pharmaceutical Bioprospecting” [and Comments], *Current Anthropology* 45(2) [2004]: 211-237
**Multiculturalism and the Future of Ethnicity**

**Topic description:** Does our increasingly inter-connected world pose an end to ethno-cultural identities? We are discussing the multiple ways in which contemporary societies, particularly in urban contexts, cope with migration and the presence of multiple ethnicities – from embracing imaginary ideologies of monoethnicty or the superiority of a dominant culture to the recognition of multiculturalism. Different understandings and perceptions of multiculturalism will be introduced and compared to the idea of “cosmopolitan” identities to demonstrate the volatility of the concept of multiculturalism itself. In the second part of the week, students are invited to discuss the merits and problems of “civic”, “ethnocultural” and “multicultural” nationalism (David Brown).

**Activities:**

- Individual presentations of reading assignments, followed by a plenary discussion.
- Students will be divided into three groups to discuss the merits and problems of three contending nationalisms (civic, ethnocultural and multicultural). Each group is given thirty minutes to prepare their position, which will then be debated in an open-floor discussion. – *Note that students’ participation and performance in this group debate is part of the assessment for this course (10%).*

**Expected learning outcomes:**

- Students will explore and understand the challenges posed by migration and resulting multi-ethnic demographics in the contemporary world.
- Students will compare and contrast different perceptions of multiculturalism and relate them to ethno cultural visions of monoethnicty and dominant cultures.
- Students will critically discuss different visions of nationalism and national identity in relation to culture and ethnicity.

**Readings:**

  - Chapter 7: ‘Contentious Visions: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Nationalism’ (pp. 122-130)
Students Presentations and Final Debate

**Topic description:** Except for a final discussion to review and conclude the course materials (as a final seminar session of this course), the last two weeks of the term are reserved for presentations of students’ final projects. The case studies chosen during the Workshop (in week 7) will be presented and discussed; thematic blocs will be arranged wherever possible.

**Expected learning outcomes:**
- Students will gain experience in presenting their own work and ideas to their peers and the course instructor.
- Students will demonstrate their understanding of relevant materials and topics discussed in class.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to apply knowledge gained during the course to novel contexts and critically reflect about the transferability of ideas.

**Activities:**
- Student presentations followed by plenary discussions.

**Readings:**
In preparation for their final projects, students are expected to take initiative in allocating relevant readings on their own (3-5 articles or book chapters, in addition to a selection of 2-3 relevant core readings from the materials provided earlier in the term). Assistance and suggestions will be provided by the course instructor if necessary and upon request.