Syllabus: Interpreting Contemporary Nationalism in Southeastern Europe

This course will explore different aspects of nationalism in Southeastern Europe. Focusing on former Yugoslavia, the course will also include case studies and discussions on other countries of the Balkans. Following a historical introduction, the class will mostly consider different aspects of nationalism in the social and political development of the past 20 years, ranging from causes of the wars in former Yugoslavia to the role of religion, gender, organized crime and democracy. As a 2-credit course, it is designed to first discuss each aspect on a theoretical and general level, followed by specific cases studies drawn from the region. The purpose of the course is to advance the student’s knowledge of Southeast Europe and to apply different aspects of nationalism studies to this region. The focus on Southeastern Europe is not to suggest that the reason constitutes a particularity or even exception in understanding nationalism. Phenomena discussed in class will be applicable to other countries and regions around the world.

The learning outcomes of the course will enable students upon completion to:

- Engage critically with different theories of nationalism and ethnic conflict;
- Understand the dissolution process of Yugoslavia;
- Be familiar with nationalism in Southeastern Europe, in particular in former Yugoslavia;
- Engage with different disciplinary approaches to the study of nationalism.

Requirements

Students are expected to be present and participate in the classes. Required readings will be assigned for each class.

Every student has to introduce one book to class. Every class has one book available for review. Students are expected to present the book in a short presentation (approx. 15 min.) and a handout, detailing the main argument and offering a critical analysis (including: main hypothesis, key arguments, structure of the argument, notable information, what might surprise the reader, specific comments and finally a critical examination of the arguments and questions for discussion).

The main requirement is a seminar paper (4,000-6,000 words, ca. 15-20 pages, double-spaced with footnotes). The paper can focus on any aspect covered in the course. The paper can either focus the more theoretical aspects of the class and develop them further or apply the theories to a particular case (or several). Students are encouraged to examine a case other than the country of origin. Before starting to write the paper, the topic has to be agreed upon with me.

Grading will be based on participation in class (10 %), the hand-out and presentation of the book (30 %), as well as the final paper (60 %).
Recommended General Background Reading:

- Lenard Cohen and Jasna Dragović-Soso, (eds), *Collapse in South-Eastern Europe: New Perspectives on Yugoslavia's Disintegration* (Central European Studies) (Lafayette, IN.: Purdue University Press, 2007)

1. Introduction. Historical Background

Besides an overview over the topics to be discussed during the course, the class will briefly examine some of the main trends in the development of nationalism in Southeastern Europe from the 19th century to the end of World War Two. The two key aspects are the revolutionary aspect of the nationalist movements towards the multinational empires of the region, as well as the nature of the newly emerging nation states in the region.

*Mandatory Reading:*


*Suggested Readings*


*Book for Review*

2. Nationalism in the Communism Era

The class will examine the role of nationalism under communist rule. The focus of the class will be both the theoretical stance of Communism towards nationalism and the reality in a number of cases. In a number of cases, nationalism served as a supplementary legitimizing tool for communists regimes in their attempt to bolster declining support. Particular examples under discussion include Romanian nationalism in the Ceaușecu era, as well as the period of national revival in Bulgaria.

**Mandatory Readings**


**Suggested Readings**


**Books for Review:**


3. Myths and Symbols

The importance of myths and symbols has been well documented in national movements. The class shall study the reevaluation of national histories and the creation of myths and symbols in the Post-Communist period. The key examples here are the use of the legacy of World War 2 in Croatia, Bosnia, and Serbia and the contested symbols of Macedonia.

**Mandatory Readings**


**Suggested Readings**
• Geoffrey Hosking, George Schöpflin (eds), *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

**Books for Review**

4. **Nationalism from above or below?**

As a flexible ideology, nationalism has numerous ways of expressing itself. Scholars have advanced different interpretations to the origins of nationalist movements. Some have argued that these movements were largely shaped by cultural, academic and political elites, while others have sought to emphasize the existence of strong nationalist sentiments among the population prior to mobilization from elites.

**Mandatory Readings**

**Suggested Readings**
Books for Review:

5. The Causes of Yugoslavia’s Disintegration

The disintegration of Yugoslavia has been explained by a number of different theories. Each of them relates differently to the role of nationalism in the country. Here the different theories and core controversies will be examined.

Mandatory Readings

Suggested Readings

Books for Review:

6. The Causes of Ethnic War

In this class, different explanations for the war in former Yugoslavia will be examined. The varying approaches largely follow from the discussions in the previous class on theories of the disintegration of Yugoslavia.


**Suggested Readings**


**Books for Review:**


**7. Gender and Nationalism**

This class will examine the links between gender and nationalism, focusing on issues such as war time sexual violence and cult of masculinity of nationalist movements.

**Mandatory Readings**


**Suggested Reading**

8. Democracy, Media and Nationalism

This class will study the interlinkages between democratization, the emergence of a pluralist media and nationalism. It is generally assumed that nationalism is detrimental to the development of democracy and independent media, while democratization has often been the standard prescription for preventing ethnic conflict. This class will point out the complexities in the relationship, both as how democracy has been undermined by nationalism, but also how free elections and a pluralizing media have brought to power nationalist elites.

Mandatory Readings

Suggested Readings

Books for Review:
- Mieczyslaw P. Boduszynski, Regime Change in the Yugoslav Successor States: Divergent Paths toward a New Europe (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010)

9. Religion and Nationalism

This class will look at nationalism from the perspective of church/mosque-nation relations. Topics of discussion will include the core role of religion in defining a number of Balkan national movements and the tensions between the often universalistic orientation of religions and the ethnic/national focus of churches/mosques.

Mandatory Readings:

Suggested Readings

Books for Review:
• Tone Bringa, Being Muslim the Bosnian Way (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

10. Nationalism and Organized Crime

The class explores the interrelationship between nationalism and organized crime. To which degree has nationalism been a “front” to legitimize organized crime in Southeastern Europe—is there an inherent linkage or are the connection coincidental? We will discuss the evolution of organized crime and the why in which the state has become contested between crime and nationalism and the emerging symbiosis.

Mandatory Readings

Suggested Readings

Books for Review
11. Responding to Nationalism: Post-Conflict Intervention

In continuation with the previous class, this class will examine the connection between international relations and nationalism in the post-conflict phase. The focus will be on Bosnia and Herzegovina and to a lesser degree on Kosovo. The concluding class will also summarize the different aspects of contemporary nationalism and contemplate on the role nationalism might play in the region in the future. In addition, Southeastern Europe shall be placed in the context of Europe and the role nationalism plays elsewhere on the continent.

Mandatory Readings


Suggested Readings


Books for Review


12. New Nationalisms and the Legacies of Past Conflicts

This class will discuss the rise and salience of extreme right-wing politics in the contemporary Balkans exploring the significance of the legacy of war during 1990s and the interrelationship between democratic consolidation, economic reform and crisis, EU integration and new nationalism.

Mandatory Readings


**Books for Review**
