



HIST 6003: Graduate Seminar: Nationalism
Prothro-Yeager College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Spring 2026

Instructor: Dr. John Ashbrook

Office: 215 O'Donohoe Hall

Office Hours: TR 9:30-11:30am; W 1:30-3:30pm; or by appointment

Office Phone: (940) 397-4153 or 434-386-1750

E-mail: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu

Course Description

For many Americans, the terms nation and nationalism are often misunderstood. Unfortunately, mass media and politicians reinforce this by interchangeably using the term “state,” meaning a political entity, with “nation,” meaning a particular group of people. Furthermore, today’s “international” system divides political entities into supposed “nation-states,” defined generally as a political entity usually created for, by, and of a particular national group despite the presence of large minority populations. One of the objectives of this course is have the students understand the differences between people and government entities, and how and why the “nation-state” developed in the modern period. We will critique a number of theoretical arguments that trace the politicization of identity, mainly in Europe, and see why the nation replaced older regional, local, and religious identities. We will also examine the politicization of identity and explore the pitfalls of the combination of emotion, “othering”, and reification of the self and perceived in-group.

This class explores nationalism as a political ideology. It will be wide-ranging, dealing with a variety of countries and cultures as well as themes. It will not provide a comprehensive history of any single state or region—rather, I will assume that you have a background in modern European and/or world history. During the first eight weeks of the course, we will attempt to reach a general understanding of the nation and nationalism. To do so, we will discuss basic concepts and various theoretical approaches to nationalism. Thereafter, we will concentrate on the growth and metamorphosis of the nation and nationalism in Yugoslavia. To stimulate each student’s interest, you will pick a nation (not a Yugoslavian one) and do research on it throughout the semester. I will periodically ask you to elaborate on how your research is going and the conclusions you are drawing about how and why the nation developed in the way it did.

Student Responsibility and Expectations

Students are personally responsible for their own education. I am a harsh taskmaster and do not accept excuses that tend to be pervasive in today’s society. You are adults, and with age comes responsibility for your own actions or lack thereof. Active student participation in learning (which includes careful reading of ALL assignments, classroom engagement, attentive note taking and participation in discussions), the maintenance of a weekly study schedule, the

completion of ALL assignments in a timely manner, adequate preparation, and, when necessary, consultation with the instructor, is essential to meeting the learning outcomes of the course. A is a designation for excellent work and product, and B for good work and product. If your enthusiasm, work ethic, written work, and test taking efforts are merely satisfactory, you will EARN a C. The minimal effort earns a D. Remember, I am here to help you, but I will not seek you out to do so. If you come to me, I will do my best to facilitate learning and sharpen your analytical and writing skills.

Textbooks and Readings

- 1) E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, 2nd edition or later (Cambridge University Press, 1990).
- 2) Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, revised edition (Verso, 1991).
- 3) Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Cornell University Press, 1983).
- 4) Leslie Benson, *Yugoslavia: A Concise History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)
- 5) Walker Connor, *Ethnonationalism: The Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 6) Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, 0415063418.

Please order the books ASAP. Readings for the week MUST BE DONE by the beginning of the class period for which they are assigned. Summaries of EACH reading, except for the first week's articles, must be turned in at the beginning of each class period.

Recommended Texts:

There seems to be an infinite number of books and articles written on the subject of nationalism. Below are just a few that may help you in your projects for the course.

- 1) Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, 1993
- 2) Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, 1986.
- 3) Siniša Malešević, *Identity as Ideology: Understanding Ethnicity and Nationalism*, 2006.
- 4) Anthony Smith, *Ethno-symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*, 2009.
- 5) John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State*, 1994.

Academic Integrity, Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, and plagiarism (the act of using source material of other persons, either published or unpublished, without following the accepted techniques of crediting, or the submission for credit of work not the individual's to whom credit is given). Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct.

Notice: Understand the following – it applies to all assignments, **including drafts**. If you in any instance “cut and paste” from any internet source without citing that source (plagiarism) or use unapproved internet sources, you will fail the assignment in question. Depending on the severity of the offense, the professor reserves the right to employ any or all university sanctioned disciplinary actions, of which I will pursue prosecution to its fullest extent.

Artificial Intelligence Usage: The use of an **AI program** for any reason, including grammar and structure, is forbidden in this course. If you use it, the same penalties apply as in cases of academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

Requirements and evaluation

Active class participation (including daily reading summaries)	30%
Comparative book review #1 on two of the “theoretical” works	15%
Comparative book review #2 on two of the “theoretical” works	15%

Note: the second book review must not cover a book used for the first comparative review.

Final term paper	40%
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Final Grade	Percentage
A	90% plus
B	80 – 89.9%
C	70 – 79.9%
D	60 – 69.9%
F	Less than 60%

Comparative Book Reviews:

For those of you who have had class with me, you know I assign book reviews. The two that are required for this course are comparative book reviews, in which you discuss the strengths and weaknesses of two of the books we will be reading for class (not the Benson book). You will make connections between the two works, illustrating points of intersection and divergence, and make an analytical determination as to which of the two theses is the stronger in explaining nationalism. You will do this twice during the semester. These exercises are meant, in part, to be a piece of the theoretical and/or literature review section of your final paper. However, they are not meant to be the only works on nationalism you use in your literature review.

Remember, in your critique you should be answering such questions as: is the argument believable, well researched, persuasive, well written, etc. Does the author fulfill his or her stated or implied purpose? Is the argument subtle or ham-fisted? I will provide a “how to” sheet with a barebones description of how to do an academic review. I suggest you use review essays from an academic journal (such as the *American Historical Review*) to get a feel for the academic purpose of the assignment.

Research Paper: Each student will research, write drafts, and present a final paper on a research topic of his or her choice. The paper (4500 word **minimum**, but no longer than 6000, **NOT** including footnotes or bibliography wordage) topic must be approved by me (a meeting with me in the first two weeks of class would behoove you) that directly tackles an issue concerning nationalism in the modern period. You must have an approved topic by the third week of class. Start your research early. The final paper is due during finals week. Since research and writing are skills that can only be acquired through doing, we will be dedicating some class time to preparation, research, writing, and rewriting the final paper. With this in mind, I have assigned deadlines for various parts of the paper to be turned in for evaluation throughout the semester. The student will produce a **working outline for the paper by the 6th week of class, two**

comparative book reviews, a complete draft by week 13, and the final copy during exam week. The student **MUST** do each of these steps and have assignments turned in **ON TIME**. Failure to do so will result in grade reductions for the paper.

Participation: Active participation means not only attending class, but contributing to discussion, asking questions, and being engaged. Just showing up **IS NOT ADEQUATE**. If you can't commit, there's no reason to take the course. The summaries are a part of your participation grade (200 words for **EACH** reading assigned on that day, due in the first five minutes of class). They serve three purposes. First, they show me that you are reading and understand the theses and main points of each assignment. Second, if done with a vision of your final paper and reviews in mind, some may be used to help you craft the verbiage in your other written assignments. In essence, you are writing parts of your main assignment throughout the semester. Be sure to include all bibliographical information at the top of each summary so you have the necessary information immediately at hand.

Extra Credit

I do **NOT** offer extra credit.

Make Up Work

I will only allow make up work if there is a legitimate excuse for missing a deadline. I have sole discretion in determining whether or not a reason is acceptable. University functions approved by the administration count as excused. Other reasons must be documented in some acceptable form or fashion (proof).

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

I use MSU's D2L platform to post documents and make announcements. Each student must be familiar with it as it provides a source of communication between student and professor. In the first week, I will post the syllabus and readings. You can log into **D2L** through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor. However, we will NOT use D2L email or chat in this course. If you need to contact me, use my regular email and please provide me with your preferred email at the beginning of the semester.

Online Computer Requirements

It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer. ***Assignments are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.***
Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!

Instructor Class Policies

Conduct: All students are expected to act as responsible adults. Any disruptions or distractions will be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Below you will find general guidelines covering certain unacceptable actions and/or behaviors. As a general rule any behavior that disrupts class will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to assist in maintaining a classroom environment conducive to learning. To ensure that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from class time, students are prohibited from engaging in any form of distraction. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom shall result, minimally, in a request that the offending student leave the classroom. Furthermore, the professor reserves the right to deduct points from the student's semester total or remove the student from the course. **Arriving late is considered a distraction.** If arriving more than ten (10) minutes late – **DO NOT** enter the classroom.

Electronic Devices, Texting, and Phones: The use of tape recorders, iPods, mp3s, or any other recording device in class is **prohibited**. It is imperative that you turn off phones, all other communication devices, and electronic equipment before entering the classroom. The use of a telephone or texting device for any reason is prohibited. *On the first offense the student will be penalized 20 points on her or his participation score for the week. The second offense will result in the student being asked to leave the classroom. The professor reserves the right to expel and administratively withdraw a student from the class upon the third offense.*

Laptops, Tablets, etc.: You must obtain permission from the professor to use laptops, tablets, and phones (or any other device capable of accessing the internet) in the classroom. Recent scholarship suggests that laptops and tablets are **major distractions** to fellow students and generally do not enhance learning or the classroom experience. Furthermore, there will be no surfing, texting, emailing, etc. in the classroom, unless I specifically ask the students to do so.

E-mail: Note that e-mail correspondence is the most effective and convenient way in which to communicate with me outside the classroom. The professor/student relationship is professional by nature and, accordingly, your e-mail correspondence should be constructed professionally. DO NOT use the D2L email function. Please provide me your preferred email at the beginning of the course, and check it daily. My email address is: john.ashbrook@msutexas.edu. Again, DO NOT use the email function on D2L. I will NOT get your message if you do.

Attendance and your grade: I structured this course so that it is to the student's advantage to attend class regularly. From past experience, students who choose not to attend on a regular basis are not successful. I allow two, and only two unexcused absences. After that, each unexcused absence will result in a penalty to your participation grade. If you have a total of 3 unexcused absences, you will not be able to pass the course.

Withdrawals (Course Drop): The professor is NOT responsible for student withdrawals. The student is responsible for meeting all academic deadlines including withdrawal deadlines.

Services for Students with Disabilities: In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services and can be reached at (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to

provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to Student Disability Office.

Grade Appeal Process: Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University Undergraduate Catalog

Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the professor.

Course Schedule

Week I. Introduction to Identity Politics and the Basis of Nationalism

January 21: Discuss the politics of identity and the dangerous trends set by its activists and the articles sent to students during the break.

We will also discuss course policies and expectations as well as brainstorm on topics of interest to the students.

Readings: Anna Triandafyllidou, "Imagining the Nation in the 21st Century,"
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nana.13122>

Harris Mylonas and Maya Tudor, "Nationalism: What we know and what we still need to know,"

<https://www.annualreviews.org/docserver/fulltext/polisci/24/1/annurev-polisci-041719-101841.pdf?expires=1766066633&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=2F37EFA7B1D20AA655D212FE85B93D84>

Jonathan Hearn, "National identity: banal, personal, and embedded,"

<https://research.ebsco.com/c/bchnnf/viewer/pdf/qsct2gxgzz?route=details>

Week II. Defining the Nation and Nationalism: Words Matter

January 26: Connor, xi-113

January 28: Using JSTOR and online databases to research and find reviews of books

Week III. The Question of Nation as Modernity and Modernity as "National"

February 2: Conner, 118-224

February 4: Each student must locate an academic book review of the Conner book and be able to present the argument of the review and to critique it in class

You must have paper topic approval by beginning of class.

Week IV. The Modern State and the "Necessity" of Nationalism and the Nation, Part I

February 9: Gellner, entire book

February 11: Each student must locate an academic book review of the Gellner book and be able to present the argument of the review and to critique it in class

Week V. Marxist Interpretation of Nationalism

February 16: Hobsbawm, 1-100

February 18: How to do a comparative book review (discussion)

Week VI. Marxist Interpretation of Nationalism, Part II

February 23: Hobsbawm, 101-192

Working “outline” of paper project DUE

February 25: Each student must locate an academic book review of the Hobsbawm book and be able to present the argument of the review and to critique it in class

Week VII. Imagining the Community

March 2: Anderson, xi-82

March 4: Students will discuss their topics with the class and brainstorm possible paths of argumentation for their final projects

FIRST BOOK REVIEW DUE BY 5PM

Week VIII. Nationalism, the State, and Fictive Ideological Identity

March 16: Anderson, 83-206

March 18: Each student must locate an academic book review of the Anderson book and be able to present the argument of the review and to critique it in class

Week IX. A Reasoned Critique of the Purely “Modernist” Perspective

March 23: Smith, Preface - 116

March 25: TBA

Week X. Reasoned Critique, Part II

March 30: Smith, 117-228

April 1: Each student must locate an academic book review of the Smith book and be able to present the argument of the review and to critique it in class

Week XI. Yugoslavia: A Case Study in Identity and Nationalism

April 6: Benson, 1-72

April 8: Benson, 73-131

SECOND BOOK REVIEW DUE BY 5PM

Week XII. Yugoslavia: Tamping Down Nationalism and the Pressure Cooker Explodes

April 13: Benson, 132-200

April 15: Discussions of student progress on final papers

Week XIII. Nationalism, History, and Genocide

April 20: Marko Attila Hoare, "Genocide in the Former Yugoslavia Before and After Communism," *Europe-Asia Studies* 62 (7) (2010), 1193-1214 [JSTOR]
Stanley Tambiah, "Obliterating the 'Other' in Former Yugoslavia," *Paideuma* 44 (1998), 77-95 [D2L]

COMPLETE AND POLISHED DRAFT OF FINAL PAPER DUE BY 5PM

April 22: "Yugoslav Wars," Wikipedia page [be ready to critique the page thoroughly]

Week XIV. Student presentations of final paper projects

April 27: Three student presentations: 15 minutes each with class critique

April 29: Three student presentations: 15 minutes each with class critique

Week XV. Finalizing Student Final Papers

Students can make meetings with me as necessary.

TERM PAPER DUE DURING EXAM WEEK!