



Nations & Nationalism: Locating the Nation in the Everyday

Course Credits: 4 (3+1)

School: Open across all schools and levels (except first-year undergraduates)

Preferred number of students: 15

Course Instructor: Shachi Seth

Currently, nationalism is held as one of the most powerful political ideas of the 20th century, and the nation-state- as an entity inextricably linked to questions of identity. The persistence of nationalism as an indispensable form of both group and individual identities has allowed it to create a space such that it seems like a natural fact of human existence. Western ideas of modernity and progress are strongly rooted in a premise of nationalism, and while former colonies have found new iterations of the idea, the institutional, cultural, and ideological presence of nationalism persists. The nation-state becomes a predictable unit for assimilation and resistance, for hegemonies and counter-hegemonies. This course seeks to understand the ubiquitous evolution of the “nation” and nationalisms, with special regard to the Indian context.

As the category of the nation finds new meanings in contemporary political discourse, what remains unchanging is the primacy in loyalty and allegiance demanded towards the nation. In that, it becomes crucial to understand what a nation is, what it consists of, and whether it is an organic mode of being. This first part of the course shall look at the prominent debates in nationalism- some Indian thinkers & the origin and nature of the nation form; primordial-biological theories, modernization theses, ethno-symbolic logics. In the latter part, we critically examine the category of the nation-state through case studies, its symbolic and material imaginations, and its lived experiences, with a primary focus on India.

We will think about the following questions through reading and discussions: What is a nation? What are the different ways of belonging in a nation? What is it about nation-states that makes them a ubiquitous unit of identity across the world? Are nations inherently existent, or are they manufactured products of relatively recent human history? How does an individual feel a sense of kinship with millions of other members of a particular nation, including those who are alive, deceased, or yet to be born, most of whom they have never met? What societal factors transform strangers into perceived kin, and how is this sense of belonging among unknown individuals sustained? What makes nationalism such a powerful emotion that people are willing to die (and kill) for it?

This course is targeted at anyone interested in a critical examination of the idea of the nation itself and of its various manifestations in our lived experiences. Additionally, the course shall encourage a critical examination of the self, and perceptions of selfhood and belonging that are prominent in the contemporary world. The course will be text-heavy, and we will be reading, writing, and thinking through a variety of materials. Please be prepared to work closely with texts.

Some of the themes explored in this course will be:

- Theories of nationalism
- Indian Nationalism: Understanding Indian nationalism through key thinkers.
- Nation and Culture: National culture; The nation as a modern modular form of social organization premises itself on a secular imagination. If so, then does religion have a place in the national form? This section will also deal with questions on caste, gender, and class, and their unique ways of being incorporated within the nationalist discourse.
- The Everyday Nation: A look at the nation in cinema, art, literature, and everyday practices of consumption.

2. Course Intended Learning Objectives(Aim)

Course Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Activities	Assessments/ Activities
To understand the concepts of “nation” and “nationalism” from major theoretical perspectives	Lectures, Powerpoint presentations,	Response papers, quizzes
To critically recognize - look, listen for, see, hear, and decode- language and symbols around them in everyday life that contribute to the development and reinforcement of national identity.	Lectures, Discussions, Visual Analysis	Presentations on applying theories to everyday contexts,
Critical thinking and improved research writing	Workshop mode discussion, in-class quizzes	oral presentations, essays
Ability to synthesize texts into original arguments and claims about the nature and forms of nationalism	In-class writing, discussions, exercises	Presentations, essays

3. Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Evaluation breakup

Internal breakup:

- Three response papers of 10 marks each(1 due every 4 weeks) (30% total)
- One 3000 word essay synthesizing texts and everyday observations to make an original argument about nationalism (25%)
- Class Presentations and Group Exercises (15%)
- Class Participation (10%)

External breakup: Examination (20%)

Grade Definition

JGU approves the use of this rubric for FINAL ASSESSMENT grading as indicated below:

COURSE LETTER GRADES AND THEIR INTERPRETATION			
Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Points	
O	80 and above	8	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability.
A+	75 - 79	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability.
A	70 - 74	7	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing material and originality in thinking and presentation.
A-	65 -69	6	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills.
B+	60 - 64	5	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B	55 - 59	4	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of the study and reasonable critical and analytical skills.
B-	50 - 54	3	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials, and poor critical and analytical skills.

P1	45 - 49	2	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter .
P2	40 - 44	1	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course.

4. Academic Integrity

Academic Honesty, Cheating, and Plagiarism.

In line with JGU policy, JSIA operates a zero-tolerance approach to plagiarism. The unacknowledged use of material by others within your work is a violation of academic integrity and all reported cases will be investigated before potential disciplinary action. Instructors will address methods of citation and presentation within written work.

The use of AI is considered unethical in activities related to critical thinking and writing. Although you may use AI to direct you to resources or to help with structure, you are expected to bring your own ideas to the table. This will be further addressed in the classroom.

Participation/Attendance Policy

Students are expected to attend every session and should be willing to engage in discussion, in-class writing, as well as note-taking when needed. A number of classes will be taking workshop and seminar approaches, and students will be informed of the same.

Please also note that the class room is a place for free expression and critical thinking and this comes with a responsibility on the part of students to respect opinions expressed and actively participate in the work of the classroom discussion. This course may discuss a range of issues and events that might provoke strong emotional responses. It is critical to ensure that all students collectively benefit from the course, and do not feel disturbed due to either the content of the course or the conduct of the discussions. Therefore, it is incumbent upon all within the classroom to pledge to maintain respect towards our peers.

Use of phone/ texting/ laptop is not allowed during class. Please do not take phone calls during class.

5. Keyword Syllabus

Nationalism, Theories, Culture, India, Media, Everyday.

6. Course Material (tentative)

Text books:

Anderson, Benedict. (1991). *Imagined Communities*. New York, NY: Verso. ISBN: 9780860915461.

Michael Billig. (1995). *Banal Nationalism*. Sage Books (excerpts)

Srirupa Roy. 2007. Beyond Belief: India and the Politics of Postcolonial Nationalism. Durham: Duke University Press (Selections)

Tanika Sarkar, Hindu Wife, Hindu Nation: Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism, Indiana University Press, 2002.

Reference books:

Bose, Sugata and Ayesha Jalal. (2014). Modern South Asia: History, Culture and Economy. Delhi: OUP (selections)

Journal Articles:

Roy, S. (2006). "A Symbol of Freedom": The Indian Flag and the Transformations of Nationalism, 1906-2002. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 65(3), 495–527.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/25076079>

Ramaswamy, S. (2001). *Maps and mother goddesses in modern India*. *Imago Mundi*, 53(1), 97–114. doi:10.1080/03085690108592940
10.1080/03085690108592940

Essays:

Rabindranath Tagore, "Nationalism in India" (1917)

A.K. Ramanujan "Is There an Indian Way of Thinking?" (1989)

Anthony D. Smith vs. Ernest Gellner "The Nation: Real or Imagined?" (1996)

Ambedkar, B. What Constitutes a Nation? In Pakistan or Partition of India (essay. pdf)

Ernest Renan. "What is a Nation?" in Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny (eds.) *Becoming National: A Reader*. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 41-55.

Clifford Geertz "Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics" (1973) (pp. 255-269)

Tilak, B G. Yearning for a Hindu Nation, Revivalism and Nationality, Who is an Alien. Essay Delivered in Benaras, 1906, in Irfan Habib (ed), *India Nationalism: The Essential Writings*. Delhi: Aleph: 48-49(essays, pdf)

Rai, Lala Lajpat. A Study of Hindu Nationalism, Communalism and Hindu Nationalism, Irfan Habib (ed), *India Nationalism: The Essential Writings*. Delhi: Aleph: 53-60 (essays, pdf)

Sri Aurobindo. Nationalism is Religion, Irfan Habib (ed), *India Nationalism: The Essential Writings*. Delhi: Aleph: 76-87. (essay, pdf)

Web Sources

<https://openstax.org/books/introduction-anthropology/pages/8-4-modern-nation-states>

Session Plan:

Session	General Topic	Readings	Pedagogy
Week 1	What is nationalism?	Anderson (1991) <i>Imagined Communities.</i> (1-7)	Personal Writing, Discussion
Week 2	Indian Nationalist Thought-1	Tagore, What is Nationalism?; Ambedkar, What Constitutes a Nation?	Reading, Discussion
Week 3	Contd.		Response Paper 1
Week 4	Theories of Nationalism: Primordial & Modernist approaches		
Week 5	The National Imagination	Anderson (1991) <i>Imagined Communities.</i> (excerpts) Gellner, Ernest. 1996. Reply: Do Nations Have Navels?, in Nations and Nationalism 2(3):366-370.	
Week 6	Contd.	Contd.; Michael Billig, <i>Banal Nationalism</i>	Student Presentations, Lecture, Discussions
Week 7	Contd.		
Week 8	Symbols of Nationhood	Srirupa Roy. <i>Symbols of Freedom</i> ; Sumathi Ramaswamy	
Week 9	Contestations: Religion, Caste, Class	Fea	
Week 10	Gendered nationalism		
Week 11	Economic nationalism		
Week 12	Globalization and Nationalism	McDonaldization	

Week 13	First draft of final essay		
Week 14	Feedback		
Week 15	Final Essays		