

UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
GOV 312L: Nationalism and Violence
Tuesday & Thursday 3:30pm - 5:00pm
Fall 2025

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Sign Up Link:

Course Description

Nationalism is one of the most powerful forces shaping our world today, and its intersections with violence have profound consequences on both local and global scales. This course, “Nationalism and Violence,” explores the complex relationship between nationalist movements and violent conflict, providing students with a deep understanding of how these dynamics unfold. By exploring key concepts like ethnic vs. civic nationalism, students will critically engage with case studies ranging from peaceful nationalist movements to those that have led to wars, ethnic cleansing, and genocide.

In accordance with the UT Course Catalog, this course will center on how nationalism can shape American policies and how American institutions, such as the United States Constitution and Declaration of Independence, can shape nationalism and nationalist violence. Students will examine the US Constitution and other institutions to see how they shape conceptions of nationalism. This course will also draw on other forms of nationalist violence in other countries to provide a more robust understanding of the topic.

In an era where questions of identity, sovereignty, and belonging are at the forefront of both American domestic and global politics, understanding how nationalism drives both unity and division is crucial. This course equips students to analyze how nationalist ideologies can be mobilized for inclusion or exclusion, and how they often play a central role in shaping conflicts. Additionally, students will explore solutions to mitigate nationalist violence. This course will deepen your ability to critically assess nationalism and its potential for both constructive and destructive outcomes.

Course Objectives

In this course, students should expect to walk away with the following **academic** understanding.

1. Foundations and Varieties of Nationalism

Students will develop a deep understanding of the theoretical foundations of nationalism, distinguishing between civic and ethnic forms.

2. Causes and Consequences of Nationalist Violence

By studying the intersections between nationalism and violence, students will investigate how nationalist rhetoric and identity are mobilized in both peaceful and violent ways.

3. Case Studies of Nationalist Movements

Students will engage with both variations of nationalism in the United States along with diverse case studies to analyze how nationalism has manifested in various forms of violence. They will examine both the motivations and the outcomes of these movements.

4. Potential Solutions to Nationalist Violence

Students will gain insight into possible solutions to mitigate nationalist violence. They will be tasked with applying these lessons to contemporary and historical conflicts, developing strategies to prevent or resolve violence tied to nationalism.

In addition to the academic objectives of this class, I will aim to cultivate skills that will benefit students in their professional life. The following are the specific **professional skills** that the course will focus on:

1. Critical Thinking & Problem Solving

Students will develop strong analytical skills, learning how to break down complex problems, assess data or information critically, and develop solutions.

2. Time Management and Organization

Students will submit weekly assignments for 10 out of 15 weeks of the semester, scheduled at the end of the workweek.

3. Writing & Communication

Students will submit multiple writing assignments throughout the course that will emulate writing styles in the workplace. This will include both informal writing, including memos to update supervisors on project development, and formal writing for larger work projects.

Note on Course

This course will include materials on violent conflict. Content may include: violence, kidnapping and abduction, sexual assault, abuse, racism, ethnic discrimination, religious discrimination, and sexism. Please note that all materials are used for instructional purposes only. Engaging with this content may be emotionally and intellectually challenging, and some content may be particularly sensitive. Please reach out and meet with me if this content is challenging in these ways, and I will do my best to find alternative readings, assignments, or discussion opportunities.

Required Course Texts

In an attempt to make this course as accessible as possible, I have limited the course materials to pdfs available on canvas and other materials available on the internet. All material available on the internet will include a url in the syllabus. All other material will be uploaded to canvas.

Grading Policy

Assignments of Grades

Grades are assigned on the following scale: A = 94–100; A– = 90–93; B+ = 87–89; B = 84–86; B– = 80–83;...F = 63 or lower. At the end of the semester, I will automatically round up all grades within 0.50 of the next grade boundary. For example, if a student has a grade of 86.50, it will be rounded up to a 87, granting a B+. However, grade increases for students whose grades are below this 0.50 threshold will not be rounded up.

Assignments

All assignments will be due at 5:00pm on Fridays. This policy is in place to (1) accustom students to a professional work week and (2) provide a class environment conducive to a work-life balance. This means that multiple assignments may be due on the same day and at the same time.

Exams - 45%

The midterm and final exams account for 45% of your final grade (20% for the first exam and 25% for the final). They will be a mixture of multiple choice, identification, and essay questions.

Essay - 25%

Students will be required to complete one essay assignment. This essay will be a 5 to 7 page paper (approximately 1,200 - 2,000 words). Students must cite at least 5 sources, either from the course or outside of the course.

Students may choose from one of three prompts:

Prompt 1: Analyze the role of technology in the spread of nationalist violence. Is it easier or harder for nationalist violence to be committed? Is it easier or harder for nationalist violence to spread? You must discuss at least two cases (either discussed in class or outside of class).

Prompt 2: Can nationalism ever be a force for peace? Analyze at least two cases (either discussed in class or outside of class) where nationalist movements were used to resolve conflict or bring about positive change.

Prompt 3: Does nationalist conflict end when violence ends, or does it continue to persist? Can nationalist tensions, especially ethnic nationalist tensions, ever fully be resolved? Discuss at least two cases (either discussed in class or outside of class).

Prior to submitting the essay, students will be required to submit a proposal for their paper to receive feedback on the direction. This will be a two-paragraph summary of (1) what prompt the student will answer, (2) what their thesis statement will be, and (3) what cases the students will discuss.

Alternative to Essay - 25%

In an attempt to place a premium on critical engagement and dialogue, I will offer an alternative to the essay assignment: a structured discussion with the instructor over the essay questions. This will be a 15 - 20 minute conversation that will begin with the student providing an answer to one of the three essay questions above. The student is required to bring an outline to the scheduled discussion. After the planned response, I will ask 2-3 follow up questions to further engage the student on these topics.

The students will be evaluated on the following:

- Preparation
- Completion of Answer
- Ability to Engage with the Follow-Up Questions

In order to be eligible for this alternative the student MUST:

1. Register interest in the Discussion Assignment by September 2.
2. Sign up for a timeslot for the Discussion Assignment by September 15.

Failure to meet these deadlines result in the student forfeiting their opportunity for the alternative assignment.

If the students fails to show up to the scheduled timeslot without prior notice (more than 6 hours), the student will receive an automatic 0 with no chance to submit an essay.

Reflections - 30%

Participation will be measured through weekly reflection assignments on the materials covered that week. This will account for 30% of your final grade.

Each Friday at 5:00pm, you will need to submit a one paragraph reflection (5 sentences minimum and 200 words minimum) on the assigned materials for that week. This is meant to be a personal reaction on the material. You can discuss your reactions, something you learned from the material, something that surprised you, something that speaks directly to your life, or any questions you have regarding the material. *I do not want simply a summary of the material*; I want you to engage with it. Each reflection will be graded out of 10 points. In order to attain all 10 points, your reflection must clearly engage with the material and present personal response.

I have included recommendations for reflection if students have writer's block. However, please note that students do not need to answer these specific questions. They are provided as a courtesy.

I understand that there may be barriers to completing these reflections. For that reason, students are required to complete 10 out of 13 weekly reflections.

Bonus Credit

Throughout the course, there will be two opportunities for bonus credit.

1. Attendance in class: Bonus points will be rewarded as a surprise to reward consistent attendance in class.
2. Participation in the final week special topic section: Students may prepare a ten-minute presentation on a special topic pertaining to nationalism or nationalist violence (with approval from the instructor) for the final week of the course for an extra 2 points added to their overall grade. Students must sign up for these presentations three weeks in advance. With enough interest, students may need to present in groups. More details on the presentations will be revealed in class closer to the date of the presentations.
3. Otherwise, students will have no other options to earn bonus credit. Requests for alternative bonus credit or grade increases at the end of the semester will be denied.

Request for Review of Grades

If you have a complaint about how your exam (or paper) was graded, I am willing to review. You must submit a one-page formal appeal addressing the problem and explain clearly what you originally wrote, why you wrote it, and how you think your original response correctly answered the question. Additionally, you must turn in the original exam (or paper) along with your typed appeal. All requests for a review of grades must be submitted within one week of receiving the grade.

Expectations of Students

Class Expectations

Attendance in class is expected and necessary for success in the course. Occasionally, students demonstrate insensitivity to other students and to instructors by disrupting classes. Arriving late for class, packing up bags prior to the end of class, and cell phone use are all disruptive activities. Browsing the internet, checking email, and playing games on laptops are also inappropriate in class.

Moreover, I will not tolerate incivility in class. It is exciting and healthy to exchange a diversity of opinions, but in no case should anyone demean another because of their viewpoint. If you have any questions about what classroom civility entails, please contact me.

Writing Expectations

In this course, all assignments must adhere to professional writing standards, similar to what is expected in a workplace setting. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Complete Sentences: All written submissions should be composed of complete sentences that clearly convey your thoughts and arguments. Avoid fragments and run-on sentences.
- Formal Language: Use formal academic language in your writing. Avoid slang and overly casual expressions.
- Grammar and Mechanics: Proper grammar, punctuation, and spelling are essential. Proofread your work carefully before submitting, as errors in these areas can significantly detract from the quality of your writing.

Failure to adhere to these standards may result in a deduction of points. If you are unsure about what is expected, please consult resources such as the university writing center or ask for clarification before the assignment is due.

Course Policies

Syllabus

Each of you needs to complete the assignment on Canvas by the second class to let me know that you have read through the syllabus and that you understand all that is required of you. If you have larger course questions, please ask them in class or in the assignment.

Make-up Exams and Assignments

I will offer make-up exams without a valid excuse according to university guidelines. You will not need to email me about excuses for missing (i.e. sleeping in late, family emergency, mental health emergency, etc.). **However, ALL make-up exams will be conducted on the day and time allotted for the final exam: Saturday, December 13, 8:00 am-10:00 am** This includes the

first exam. Please Note: This will fall *after* the second and final exam for the course. If you can provide a doctor's note or other university-approved document, then I will consider an earlier date for the make-up exam. You must bring the university-approved document to me within a week of the missed exam to reschedule.

Assignments arriving late (i.e., later than 15 minutes) will be subject to a 1/3 grade reduction. For each successive late day, your grade will be reduced by 1/3 each day (i.e., an A will be lowered to an A- on the first day late, an A- to a B+ on the second day late, and so on).

Artificial Intelligence Policies

A hot topic for all instructors is the looming shadow of Artificial Intelligence (AI). While it is a tool for students to use to propel their intelligence and work, it often can produce sub-par work and limit true learning and engagement with material. Additionally, there are ethical concerns over the use of AI for multiple parties, which we will discuss on the first day of class.

It is against course policy to directly copy and paste from AI tools, namely Large Language Models (LLMs), including ChatGPT, Google Gemini, etc for assignments. This is considered plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

However, you may use LLMs for the following purposes:

- To help you organize your thoughts
- To offer prompts to direct your writing
- To offer potential cases to examine
- To help answer clarification questions on content
- To help create study guides/flash cards

To facilitate my AI policy, **I have created a LLM tutor through UT Sage that is trained on the materials of this course.** You can access this LLM through Canvas.

I have developed assignments to minimize the value of AI in their completion. These papers are built on your own beliefs and arguments, not on a regurgitation or summary of facts. Reflection essays are supposed to be personalized and thoughtful engagements on the course material, not regurgitating facts. The essay is persuasive in nature, and I expect to see iterations of its development through a proposal and final draft.

Failing to follow these conditions shall constitute a violation of UT Austin's Institutional Rules on academic integrity.

Academic Integrity

All students at UT are expected to uphold principles of honesty, transparency, and diligence in their academic work. Your grades should reflect your own efforts and achievements, and you must avoid

all forms of academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, or falsification. Beyond maintaining your own integrity, you are also encouraged to help your peers commit to the same standards of honesty.

While academic integrity is a general expectation, mastering specific skills like proper citation is essential, especially in the age of the internet. I will closely review all assignments and exams for signs of academic misconduct, such as plagiarism or cheating.

When submitting work, it must represent your own original thinking. If you use ideas or words from other authors, they should be clearly integrated to support your argument and properly cited using accepted referencing standards. Failing to give proper credit for someone else's work, intentionally or unintentionally, is considered plagiarism. This serious violation can result in failing the assignment or the entire course, and in severe cases, it may lead to expulsion from the university.

If you're ever unsure about citation or proper attribution, I encourage you to consult resources like the university's writing center or speak with me. The MLA Handbook and Harbrace College Handbook are also useful tools to guide your writing and referencing practices. Please also see the University Honor Code site for more information:[\[here\]](#).

Sharing of Class Materials

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, assessments (exams, papers, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class unless you have my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials promotes cheating. It is a violation of the University's Student Honor Code and an act of academic dishonesty. I am well aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to Student Conduct and Academic Integrity in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in sanctions, including failure in the course.

Family

The following is an attempt to insure family friendliness while also maintaining a proper learning environment. [I borrowed heavily and adapted these policies from both Dr. Michael Findley and Dr. Melissa Cheyney's syllabi.]

- Babies who are exclusively breastfed are always welcome in class whenever necessary.
- For parents of older children and babies, unexpected childcare challenges may sometimes arise. While not intended as an ongoing solution, bringing your child to class occasionally to cover a temporary gap in care is perfectly acceptable.
- I ask that everyone work together to foster an inclusive and respectful environment, which includes being supportive of students with diverse parenting responsibilities.

- If you bring a baby or child to class, please sit near the exit so that, if your child requires attention and might distract others, you can step outside briefly. I'll be flexible in helping you stay up to date with class material should this occur.
- Lastly, I understand that many parents face exhaustion, especially after children are in bed. While I hold the same expectations for all students, I'm more than willing to discuss ways to support you in balancing coursework with parenting.

Accessible, Inclusive, and Compliant Statement

The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). Please refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: <http://disability.utexas.edu/>. If you are already registered with D&A , please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Schedule of Course Material

Week One: Introduction

August 26

Description: Course and Syllabus Overview

Material: None

August 28

Description: What is a Nation?

Material: “‘Nations’ or ‘States’ an Attempt at Definition” By Peter Ravn Rasmussen in Global Policy Forum [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

Reflect on how you define a nation. How does your definition compare with those discussed in class or readings? What personal experiences or prior knowledge have influenced your understanding of what constitutes a nation?

Week Two: Nationalism

September 2

Description: What is Nationalism?

Material: Garner, Renaud-Philippe. “Nationalism.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*. May 18, 2022. Oxford University Press. (Page 1-3) [CANVAS]

September 4

Description: What is Nationalism? Part II

Material: “One Simple Trick for Understanding Nationalism” in Alex Nowrasteh’s Deep Dives [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

How have you perceived nationalism prior to these readings? Do you think there is a distinction between nationalism and patriotism?

Week Three: Origins of Nationalism

September 9

Description: Primordialism

Material: “National identity and the ‘great divide’” in Bellamy, Alex J. *The formation of Croatian national identity: A centuries-old dream?*. Manchester University Press, 2003. [CANVAS]

September 11

Description: Modernism

Material: “Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities” by Mikkel Flohr in Critical Legal Thinking [LINK]

“The Role of Modernism in Shaping Nationalism” by Hafsa Ammar [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

How do primordialist and modernist views of nationalism differ? Reflect on how these theories might affect the way people perceive their national identity today. Which view resonates more with your understanding of nationalism, and why?

Week Four: Ethnic vs. Civic Nationalism

September 16

Description: Ethnic Nationalism

Material: Hislope, Robert, and Anthony Mughan. “Ethnic Nationalism.” *Introduction to Comparative Politics: The State and Its Challenges*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 205–235. [CANVAS]

September 18

Description: Civic Nationalism

Material: The Case for Civic Nationalism by Michael D. Purzycki [LINK] [ALSO AVAILABLE ON CANVAS IF PAYWALLED]

Recommendations for Reflection

Which form of nationalism aligns more with your own understanding of national identity? Have your views shifted after engaging with these readings?

Week Five: Unique Forms of American Nationalism

September 23

Description: Religious Nationalism & American Christian Nationalism

Material: Juergensmeyer, Mark. “The global rise of religious nationalism.” *Current issues in law and religion*. Routledge, 2017. 40-52. [CANVAS]

What Is Christian Nationalism? by Paul D. Miller in *Christianity Today* [LINK]

September 25

Description: Native American Nationalism and Nation-Building

Material: Poliandri, Simone. “Introduction: Nationalism and Nation Re-Building in Native North America.” *Native American Nationalism and Nation Re-Building: Past and Present Cases*, edited by Simone Poliandri, State University of New York Press, 2016, pp. 1–28. [CANVAS]

Recommendations for Reflection

How does religious nationalism differ from non-religious forms of nationalism? In what ways do religious motivations change the character or goals of nationalist movements? How do alternative or lesser-known forms of nationalism change your perspective on nationalism?

Week Six: Outcomes of Nationalism

September 30

Description: Inclusive vs. Exclusive Nationalism

Material: “Understanding the Constructive and Destructive Natures of Nationalism” in Council on Foreign Relations [LINK]

October 2

Description: Exam 1

Material: None

Recommendations for Reflection

Does nationalism foster inclusion or exclusion? How might the different forms of nationalism we have discussed in class (ethnic, civic, religious, etc) and beliefs on the origins of nationalism affect whether nationalist groups are inclusive or exclusive?

Week Seven: Violence

October 7

Description: Overview of Political Violence

Material: Darby, John. "Political Violence: An Overview." *The Ashgate Research Companion to Political Violence* 2011: n. pag. Print. [CANVAS]

October 9

Description: Overview of Collective Violence

Material: "Chapter 1: Varieties of Violence" in Tilly, Charles. *The politics of collective violence*. Cambridge University Press, 2003. [CANVAS]

Recommendations for Reflection

What is the difference between political violence and collective violence? How do they overlap? How might they interact with nationalism?

Week Eight: Mobilization of Nationalist Violence

October 14

Description: Rhetoric of Elites

Material: "Are the elites driving nationalism in post-Brexit Britain?" by Professor Mike Savage for London School of Economics [LINK]

"How a Right-Wing South African Group Incites a New Wave of White Fear" by Elles Van Gelder for Time Magazine [LINK]

October 16

Description: Rhetoric of Masses

Material: Facebook, Telegram, and the Ongoing Struggle Against Online Hate Speech" by Caroline Crystal for Carnegie Endowment for International Peace [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

How does rhetoric from elites differ from rhetoric from the masses in nationalism? Which do you think is more dangerous? Which do you think is easier to control?

Week Nine: Patterns of Nationalist Violence

October 21

Description: Individual Nationalist Violence

Case Study: United States of America

Material: ““Right wing death squad”: What to know about the Allen shooter’s neo-Nazi views” by Robert Downen for the Texas Tribune [LINK]

“The El Paso shooting isn’t an anomaly. It’s American history repeating itself” by Zack Beauchamp for Vox [LINK]

“Attacks by White Extremists Are Growing. So Are Their Connections” by Weiyi Cai and Simone Landon for the New York Times [LINK]

CONTENT WARNING: The content of this course may be particularly sensitive to Texan students, as it will touch on violent events and shootings in Texas. Please reach out to with me if this material is difficult for you to cover and we can discuss alternative materials.

October 23

Description: Collective Sporadic Nationalist Violence

Case Study: India

Material: “The Idea of India—And a Transition Toward Violent, Exclusionary Nationalism” by Nazir Ahmad and Muneeb Yousuf in the Diplomat [LINK]

“What We Can Learn From the Surge of Far-Right Violence in India” by Priti Gulati Cox and Stan Cox in The Nation[LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

How does collective violence differ from organized violence in nationalist movements? Reflect on the role of nationalist rhetoric in escalating such violence. How does the case of India illuminate these dynamics?

Week Ten: Patterns of Nationalist Violence

October 28

Description: Civil Wars and Armed Conflict

Material: “How Significant is Nationalism as a Cause of War?” by James Bingham in e-International Relations [LINK]

October 30

Description: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide

Material: Conversi, Daniele (2006) “Genocide, ethnic cleansing and nationalism.” In: Delanty, Gerard and Kumar, Krishan, (eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Nations and Nationalism*. SAGE Publications, London, UK, pp. 320-333. [CANVAS]

Recommendations for Reflection

How does nationalism escalate into war and ethnic cleansing? How do these forms of violence connect to the forms of violence we discussed last week?

Week Eleven: Solutions to Nationalist Violence

November 4

Description: Individual Acts: De-Radicalization Programs

Case Study: United States of America

Material: “Preventing Radicalization into Violent White Nationalist Movements: A Conversation with Cynthia Miller-Idriss” by the Southern Poverty Law Center [LINK]

“EPPN Series on Deradicalization: Paths to Deradicalization” by the Episcopal Church [LINK]

November 6

Description: Collective Spontaneous Violence: Preventing Hateful Rhetoric

Case Study: Myanmar

Material: PBS News “Amnesty report finds Facebook amplified hate ahead of Rohingya massacre in Myanmar” Sep 29, 2022 [LINK]

“Can Censoring Social Media Stop Extremism?” Rebecca MacKinnon, Aspen Institute [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

Are there any downsides to these solutions to nationalist violence? What are other cases of these solutions?

Week Twelve: Solutions to Nationalist Violence

November 11

Description: Civil Wars: Peace Agreements and Negotiations

Case Study: Northern Ireland

Material: Williams, K.P. and Jesse, N.G. (2001), “Resolving Nationalist Conflicts: Promoting Overlapping Identities and Pooling Sovereignty—The 1998 Northern Irish Peace Agreement.” *Political Psychology*, 22: 571-599.[CANVAS]

“As it turns 25, N Ireland’s Good Friday Agreement explained” by Jill Lawless for AP [LINK]

November 13

Description: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide: International Intervention

Case Study: Rwanda

Material: Ouafaa, R. A. F. I. “The post genocide reconciliation in Rwanda: Erasing ethnicity and building citizenship.” *International Journal of Peace and Development Studies* 12.1 (2021): 23-29. [CANVAS]

Recommendations for Reflection

Are there any downsides to these solutions to nationalist violence? What are other cases of these solutions?

Week Thirteen: Future of Nationalism and Violence

November 18

Description: Future of Nationalist Violence in America

Material: “Forget The 50 States; The U.S. Is Really 11 Nations, Author Says” in NPR [LINK]

“Our Era Is One of Defensive Nationalism. It’s Happened Before” by B. S. Rabinowitz for Time Magazine [LINK]

“New study looks at attitudes towards political violence” by UC Davis Health [LINK]

November 20

Description: Future of Nationalist Violence Globally

Material: “Understanding the New Nationalism” by Daron Acemoglu in Project Syndicate [LINK]

“The False Dichotomy Between Globalism and Nationalism” by David A. Waldman and Mansour Javidan in the Harvard Business Review [LINK]

Recommendations for Reflection

How might nationalist movements evolve in the future? Reflect on whether nationalism will continue to be a significant force driving collective violence or if other ideologies will take its place. How do modern global issues, like immigration and globalization, influence the future trajectory of nationalism?

Week Fourteen: Fall Break - No Class

Week Fifteen: Optional Presentations & Review

December 2

Description: Students may present on special topics pertaining to nationalism or nationalist violence (with approval from the instructor). Otherwise, the instructor will use this time to review course material or cover case studies and topics requested by the students.

Material: None

December 4

Description: In Class Exam

Recommendations for Reflection

How did the presentations expand on what we have learned in the course? Did any outcomes or perspectives surprise you? How did these special topics help you prepare for the final exam?
