GVPT 888I
Identity Politics

Professor: Johanna K Birnir
Location: Tydings 1111
Time: Th 12:30pm - 3:15pm
Office hrs: By appt.

Fall 2019 v1.3

1 Identity Politics

The course surveys (a selection of) the literatures on identity across types and political outcomes. These literatures, on ethnicity, religion and gender have, by and large, evolved in isolation from each other. Consequently, scholars have mostly studied separately the role of identity in shaping non-violent and violent political outcomes. The course starts by pondering the conceptualization, measurement and analytical role of ethnicity, religion and gender across identity types, with special emphasis on variance within identity across time and space. Next we turn our attention to examining the theoretical similarities and differences in the analytical role of each identity type in relation to select substantive political outcomes, both non-violent and violent. In this part of the course we pay special attention to the intersection of identity types and ask whether understanding intersecting identity vectors helps cast light on the political phenomena we are focusing on. Starting with the classics and working our way forward to current examples of the literature, we read studies ranging in methods from individual survey experiments to group level analysis, to cross national analyses relying on identity indexes. Finally, pushing up against the intellectual edge of the field we ask if, and then how, the study of identities can be better integrated to inform scholarly thinking about the intersecting role of identities in politics.

Subtopics within the study of each identity type are often even developed relatively independently.
1.1 Course requirements

Seminar attendance and active participation in discussion throughout the semester is required. This includes regular discussions of how the students’ own thinking about their topic of interest changes when employing the varied theoretical perspectives examined in the class. Each student is expected to hand in weekly summaries of the readings (along with participation 20% of grade) and lead discussions (15%). Each student is also expected to make presentations that extend the literature beyond the assigned readings (10%).

Students are expected to write a literature review on a selected topic in the domain of identity politics, with an emphasis on intersection of at least two identity types. The topic is subject to instructor approval and students will be required to highlight possible data sources for testing of hypotheses. An outline of the literature review is due towards the middle of the class (November), all students will complete a peer review of a fellow student’s literature review (10%). A final draft of the literature review is due during finals week (45% of grade), no extensions will be granted.

1.2 Academic Conduct

It is assumed that all students are familiar with and adhere to the code of academic integrity. For the relevant policies see: gradschool.umd.edu

2 Readings

Every week the assigned readings will introduce some of the classic texts for an understanding of the core of the debate covered that week. Each week we will also read a recent contribution/s to the topic for an understanding of how the debate has evolved. Several books are required for the course. Most of these will be available in the bookstore (bookholder.com) but can also be purchased online. Several articles are also required reading. Students can find those online through the UMD library. Some chapters are required reading, we will coordinate on how to distribute those. Finally, students will research and present current literature extensions with an emphasis on the intersection of identity types pertaining to the subject that week.

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2 The number of discussions led by students will vary depending on the number of students in the class. We will divide up this work in the introductory class.

3 The presentations ideally dovetail with the student’s leading of discussion and final literature review. The number of presentations depend on the number of students in the class. This will be worked out at the beginning of the class.

4 Some topics will have more published works, others will have less in this category. Discovering that there are few publications on the assigned topic is a valuable exercise in finding
3 Schedule

3.1 Introduction

Week 1. 8.29

APSA

Week 2. 9.5

Introductions and logistics. Bring your laptop and be ready to share information about the bibliographical organization and software you use. We will get to know each other a little bit, discuss how to set up your bibliographies in a way that you can share them, divide the labor of discussion leadership, coordinate on the distribution of readings etc.

3.2 Definitions and measurements

Scholars have long contemplated the conceptualization and measurement of identity. During the past half a century a paradigmatic shift in thinking about identity moved conceptualization of identity from primordialism, to constructivism, while allowing for the idea of a “hardening of identity” resulting from specific political processes. In this first part of the course we will contemplate what these approaches mean for ethnicity, religion and gender.

Some of the general questions we ask in this part of the class include:

- To what extent are the primordialism/constructivism lenses applied to divergent identity types?
- What difference does it make analytically to consider each of these identity types through a primordial or a constructivist lens?
- How far along has the literature come in thinking about the intersection of each of these identity types?
- How does the literature measure identity?
- What are the constructs and dimensions that are measured and how?

Week 3. 9.12

Defining ethnicity

“holes” in the literature.
**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 4. 9.19**

**Defining religion (with a detour into secularization theory)**

**Required:**


Recommended:


Week 5. 9.26

Defining gender (with an emphasis on intersectionality)

Required:


Skjelsbaek, Inger and Dan Smith eds. 2001. Gender, Peace and Conflict (Inter-
national Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)) Chapters 2 and 3. (e-book)


Birnir, Jóhanna, David Waguespack, Eric Dunford. Gender norms and violent behavior in a virtual world. N.d. ilcss working paper. Current version will be distributed later in the semester.

**Recommended:**


**Week 6. 10.3**

Operationalizing identity.

**Required:**


Ethnicity


Montalvo, José G., and Marta Reynal-Querol. 2012. “Ethnic Polarization,


Livney, Avital. 2019. Remote Sensing Religiosity in the Muslim World: An Initial Assessment in the Turkish Case” presented at the Vanderbilt Comparative Politics Speaker Series (January 2019); at the Middle East Initiative Speaker Series, Harvard Kennedy School (March 2019); and at University of Wisconsin-Madison Comparative Politics Colloquium (April 2019).

Intersectionality


Recommended:


Identity and substantive political outcomes

The role of identity (ethnicity, religion and gender), features in explanations of a large range of substantive political outcomes. In this course we will selectively focus only on electoral politics and violent contestations for political power. Each week we will raise questions pertaining specifically to each set of readings and the identity type we are discussing that week. However, every week we will also contemplate the answers to some common questions. These include:

- What is the puzzle posited or the question asked in this piece?
- What is the theory proposed as an answer to this puzzle/question?
- How does identity allow the author to explain the outcome in a way that other political variables cannot?
- What are some plausible alternative explanations (that may or may not be raised by this author)?
- What are the testable implications of this theory (are there some that the author overlooks)?
- What is the evidence used to test the implications of the theory?
- What are the methods used to systematize the evidence and test the implications?
- Are there alternate methods and data that would allow us to better test the authors conjectures?
- What questions remain unanswered and what else remains unclear about this topic? I.e. what is the research frontier here?
- How might the answer (theory) change if accounting for other identity types?
Week 7. 10.10

Ethnicity and electoral politics

Required:


Recommended:


Posner.
Week 8. 10.17

Ethnicity and conflict (in a broad literature on ethnicity and conflict the focus here is on electoral conflict)

Required:


Recommended ethnic conflict (a broader survey)


**Week 9. 10.24**

Birnir giving a talk at UT Austin.

A rough draft of the literature review is due next week.

**Week 10. 10.31**
Draft of the literature review due to peer reviewers.

**Religion and electoral politics**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


Margolis, Michele F. (2018). From Politics to the Pews: How Partisanship and
the Political Environment Shape Religious Identity. University of Chicago Press


**Week 11. 11.7**

**Religion and conflict (broad survey beyond electoral conflict)**

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 12. 11.14**

**Gender and electoral politics.**

**Required:**


Bothelo, Waguespack and Birnir. Current version distributed later in the semester.

**Recommended:**


https://countingcountsblog.wordpress.com/


**Week 13. 11.21**

**Gender and conflict (broad survey beyond electoral conflict)**

**Required:**


Thomas, Jakana and Kanisha Bond. 2015. Women’s Participation in Violent Political Organizations. 109:(3)488-506


**Recommended:**


**Week 14. 11.28**

Thanksgiving week

**Week 15. 12.5**

Research frontiers. Peer reviews of colleagues intersecting study of identity and a political outcomes. Collective work-shopping of theories and reviews.

**Week 16. 12.12** Final review due. Inter-sectional study of X.