1 Identity Politics

The course surveys (a selection of) the literatures on identity across types and political outcomes. As Brubaker points out "The study of religion and the study of ethnicity, [and] race, ... have been largely separate domains of inquiry, with relatively little cross-fertilization between them. This mutual isolation has been detrimental to both fields."\(^1\) Outside the literature on inter-sectionality, the same can be said about the study of gender. Furthermore, within each literature 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. Incorporating some of 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. At the same time we pay close attention to perspective. How does a predominantly white/male perspective influence earlier writing, has this changed over time and then how?

\(^1\)Brubaker, Rogers. 2015. Grounds for Difference. Harvard University Press.:5
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 inter-sec-ting role of identities in politics.

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 upload (ELMS) weekly summaries of the readings (along with participation 20% of grade). This is a reading heavy course and students are welcome to work in pairs on the summaries. To ensure equitable distribution of the work collaborative summaries should include no more than 2 participants and students are encouraged to vary participants every week. Students are expected to lead discussions (15%). Each student is also expected to make a presentation of an annotated bibliography (to be shared with other students). The presentations of annotated bibliographies should dovetail with the student’s leading of discussion, focus (ideally) on the assigned topic of greatest interest to the student, and extend the literature beyond the assigned readings to cover recent published and unpublished contributions (10%).

Finally, 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 the last day of class (45% of grade) when students will have the opportunity to briefly present their conclusions to their classmates, no extensions will be granted.

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 For an example of an annotated Bibliography see Birnir and Hultquist 2017.
4 The number of presentations depend on the number of students in the class. This will be worked out at the beginning of the class.
5 Some hints for putting together a bibliography including unpublished work. Read the websites of the scholars working on identity topics. Read the programs of recent conferences (for example https://preprints.apsanet.org/engage/apsa/public-dashboard). Read the list of recent presentations made in department workshops such as MPOSS at https://minoritypolitics.netlify.app/, or find the agenda of such workshops posted with references to titles.
6 For an example of a literature review see Birnir and Overos 2019.
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

1.2.1 Diversity

The University of Maryland and the Department of Government and Politics values diversity. Diversity refers to differences in race, ethnicity, culture, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, abilities, class, nationality, and other factors. We are committed to creating a respectful and affirming climate in which all students, staff, and faculty are inspired to achieve their full potential. We believe that actively fostering an affirming environment strengthens our department as a whole. A department that values and celebrates diversity among its students, staff and faculty is best able to develop the strengths and talents of all members of the department community.

I invite you, if you wish, to tell us how you want to be referred to both in terms of your name and your pronouns (he/him, she/her, they/them, etc.). The pronouns someone indicates are not necessarily indicative of their gender identity. Visit trans.umd.edu to learn more. Additionally, how you identify in terms of your gender, race, class, sexuality, religion, and dis/ability, among all aspects of your identity, is your choice whether to disclose (e.g., should it come up in classroom conversation about our experiences and perspectives) and should be self-identified, not presumed or imposed. I will do my best to address and refer to all students accordingly, and I ask you to do the same for all of your fellow Terps.

1.3 COVID

With respect to the COVID pandemic, we will adhere to all University policies. The class is scheduled as an in person class but this arrangement will be re-evaluated as necessary throughout the semester as per University and department guidelines.

1.3.1 In the event that instruction moves online

In case the class moves online the logistics are as follows: You can access a recurring zoom link on ELMS. Lengthy zoom meetings are taxing and with many participants seminar discussion is constrained. However, University policy prohibits requiring students to be available for meetings outside regular scheduled
class times. Working within these constraints we will break the regular 2hr and 45min class time into approximately 3 parts where everyone participates, and a 4th final part consisting of a meeting between the graduate student leader for the following week and the professor.

Specifically, each week after initial discussion and introduction of the topic (approx 20 minutes) the class will 1) divide into small breakout rooms of 2 to 3 people. The professor and 1 graduate student will co-host each meeting and circulate between the breakout rooms where students discuss the readings in light of the questions posed pertaining to the topic (definition and measurement or substance). (Approx 40 minutes) 2) After a short break (approx 10 minutes) the entire class reconvenes for a ‘presentation’ of the discussions taking place in the breakout rooms and concomitant exchange of ideas. (approx 40 minutes). 3) After a short break (approx 10 min), the graduate student helping to lead the discussion will present a brief literature extension pertaining to their selected topic within the literature of the week. (Approx 15 minutes with another 10 minutes for a discussion of this and other extensions). This concludes the joint portion of the class. The final 30 minutes of class time will be reserved for a one on one working session for the graduate student helping to lead the discussion the following week and the professor.

Note that all times are approximate and if discussion flows well for a particular topic I will adjust the time spent on each component as necessary.

### 2 Readings

For an understanding of the core of the debate covered each week the assigned readings will introduce some of the classic texts and/or recent contributions to the topic. In some cases these will be unpublished work. Unpublished work is not to be disseminated beyond the class without the author’s explicit written consent.

Several books are required for the course. Because of the pandemic I do not expect you to go to the bookstore to purchase any of these books. Instead, I expect you will borrow or purchase the books online and/or we will find alternate ways to distribute the required readings. With few exceptions the books are available as e-books. Several articles and chapters are also required reading. Students can find those online (ELMS) or through the UMD library. In week 2 the students should have surveyed the readings for their week to assure that everyone has found access to all of the readings and to coordinate on strategies to access any missing readings.

As discussion leaders students will research and present current literature extensions (ideally with an emphasis on the intersection of identity types) pertaining
to the subject that week.\(^7\)

# 3 Schedule

## 3.1 Introduction

**Week 1:1.26**

Introductions and logistics. 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. Be ready to share information about the bibliographical organization and software you use.

## 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 essentialist, to constructivist, while allowing for the idea of a “hardening of identity” resulting from specific political processes. Another important development has been the increasing emphasis on the diversity within non-majority white groups. 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 more fixed (essentialist/primordial or hardened) vs. constructivist lenses implicitly and explicitly applied to divergent identity types?
- What difference does it make analytically to consider each of these identity types through a these different lenses?
- Why is it important to consider the internal diversity of identity groups?
- How far along has the literature come in thinking about the intersection of each of identity types?
- How does the literature measure identity?

\(^7\)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 “holes” in the literature.
• What are the constructs and dimensions that are measured and how?

Assignment. Students should collaborate to make sure everyone has the assigned reading (or that it is being delivered). Scan your week’s lit review and explore some ‘extensions’. Think about how these ideally relate to your topic of interest to be discussed in a separate meeting with the professor scheduled outside class at a mutually convenient time.

Week 2:2.2

Defining ethnicity

Required:


Recommended:


Week 3: 2.9

Defining religion (with a detour into secularization theory)

Required:

Berger, Peter. 1969. The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion. Garden City, NY: Doubleday. Chapters 1,2,4 and 5 (chapters 1,2, and 4 for the purpose of defining religion, whereas chapter 5 begins our detour into secularization theory).


Recommended:


Week 4: 2.16

Defining gender (with an emphasis on intersectionality)

Required:


Recommended:

Ergebnisse, kontroversen, perspektiven


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


**Week 5: 2.23**

**Operationalizing identity.**

**Required:**


*Ethnicity*


Religion


Intersectionality


Recommended:


Dubrow, Joshua Kjerulf. 2008. “How Can We Account for Intersectionality in


4 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 6: 3.2

Ethnicity and electoral politics

Required:


Recommended:


Crisp, Brian F., Betul Demirkaya, Leslie Schwindt-Bayer, and Courtney Millian. 2016. ”The Role of Rules in Representation: Group Membership and Electoral Incentives” British Journal of Political Science.

**Week 7: 3.9**

**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)**


Campbell, D.T. 1965. Ethnocentric and Other Altruistic Motives. Lincoln, NE:


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**Week 8: 3.16**

**Religion and electoral politics**

*Required:*


*Recommended:*


Week 9: 3.23

No class: UMD Spring Break.

Week 10: 3.30

No Class. Prof Birnir attending ISA (hopefully ;)

A rough draft of the literature review due to peer reviewers next week.

Week 11: 4.6

Religion and conflict (broad survey beyond electoral conflict)

Required:


**Recommended:**


Week 12. 4.13

Rough draft of literature reviews due for peer review.

Women and electoral politics.

Required:


Recommended:


https://countingcountsblog.wordpress.com/


Week 13: 4.20
Women and conflict (broad survey beyond electoral conflict)

**Required:**


**Recommended:**


**Week 14: 4.27**

Research frontiers. Peer reviews of colleagues study of inter-secting identity and political outcomes. Collective work-shopping of theories and reviews.
Week 15: 5.4

Revised final review due. Inter-sectional literature review pertaining to X. Authors reflect on the change in their thinking as a result of exposure to the literature and peer review.