

21A.226
Ethnic and National Identity
Third Written Assignment

Throughout most of the 20th century ethnic identity and nationalism were seen as diminishing in importance, a consequence of globalization, transnational forces (e.g., labor migration, refugees), the development of supra-state institutions (the U.N., the European Union), and the spread of modernity throughout the world.

Clearly this prediction was wrong. Your assignment is to write about one or two of the explanations discussed in this course as to why it was wrong. You will select two cases to illustrate your analysis.

Choose a process that can be seen to directly or indirectly foster the maintenance (or emergence) of strong ethnic/national sentiments and behaviors. Examples include multiculturalism, new social movements based on identity (“identity politics”), culture and heritage recovery projects, the disturbing increase in ethnic/national/religious conflict, globalization, neoliberalism, the information revolution, international trade agreements like NAFTA. Then choose your two cases. You can also decide on the two cases first and then choose the one or two processes you want to analyze.

One of your cases can come from class readings, but no more.

You will be halfway to the finish line when you have chosen the process(es) and your two cases. Part of this assignment’s purpose is to help you sharpen your skills with respect to locating scholarly sources and presenting a cogent, convincing argument.

I’ll work with each of you to make sure you’ve got a good plan. But you need to make the initial choices. If you’re stumped, the course readings may provide an inspiration, especially those at the beginning (e.g., Eriksen). Or talk with/write to me.

Be sure to discuss your choice(s) with me as soon as you’ve chosen them.

Example #1: Examination of ethnic identity and nationalism in two Caribbean countries, looking at the development of an ideology of pluralist nations. This essay might look at how the notion of “nation” has been de-coupled from its usual meaning of a single “people.” Your conclusions would not claim to speak for the entire Caribbean area, but you certainly could suggest some generalizations that would likely emerge from additional research.

Example #2: The rise of ethnic/national identity in two of the former Soviet states in the Baltic region.

There are hundreds of possible topics. As always, it’s best to pick cases you’re especially interested in.

If you plan on revising this paper, the first version must be handed in by Session 20, and will be handed back in Session 22.

The final version of the third paper is due Session 24 in class. You will give a fairly formal presentation of your paper in Session 26.

7+ pages

We will discuss your choices in class in Session 19.

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