IDENTITY POLITICS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Course Details

Optional, 4 Credits
Classroom Hours: TBC
Contact Hours: TBC

Instructor Details

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Course Description:

If politics is defined as the power of humans to decide who gets what, when and how, then identity politics may be interpreted as a critical sub-text of that process of decision-making, determined on the basis of who has the capability to assign identities to humans, delineate the lines between we/others and with this, ultimately control the very meaning of identity in society. The subject of identity politics is a discursive sphere spanning the entire gamut of humanities and social sciences, requiring an inter-disciplinary approach for its understanding. In International Relations which is relatively a new discipline, the field of identity politics has rapidly acquired centrality, with multiple strands and diverse notions pertaining to the processes of identity formation, differentiation, marginalization, problems of recognition, assertions of group identities and the State versus group identity having emerged as crucial aspects of IR studies. ‘Identity Politics in International Relations’, which is an optional course, tries to explore the analytical and normative value of studying International Relations from the perspective of identity. This will be done by discussing diverse streams ranging from liberal/Marxist, realist/communitarian and postcolonial/postmodern discourses of identity formation.

COURSE STRUCTURE

Week I:
In this week, the meaning and definitions of the concept of identity would be discussed. An introductory overview of as to how the notion of identity originated in social sciences and the ways in which it has been used as an interdisciplinary concept for the purposes of analysis would be given here. In this week, we would also seek to understand as to what identity politics is all about. The main aim here is to know as to how identity politics, the politics of identity and the politics of difference are inter-twined into a triangulation, bringing the notion of identity into a pivotal position in contemporary politics.

Required Readings:


Week II:
This week examines the Dominant approaches interrogating the processes of identity construction. They include, (A) the Primordialists, (B) Perennialists and (C) Modernists. Apart from this, major discourses explaining Identity Politics: (A) Liberal/Marxist, (B) Critical/Constructivist, (C) Postmodern/Postcolonial would also be discussed.

Required Readings:

Week III:
Here, the understanding of various sources of identity formation would be initiated. In this line this week focuses on nation, religion, language and ethnicity as sources of identity formation.

Required Readings:


Week IV:
Continuing with the sources of identity formation, this week discusses gender, sexuality and race as sources of identity formation.

Required Readings:


Week V:
This week seeks to understand the emergence of the problemetique of identity in the disciplinary boundaries of International Relations. By dealing with the key dimensions relating to identity such as collective identity, self and other, difference and similarity, they will be contextualized in the conceptual domain of International Relations.

**Required Readings:**


Week VI:
Continuing from what we had begun in Week V, the origins, reproduction, and effects of identity on the sphere of international relations would be explored from different perspectives. The issue of identity which is one of the crucial components of the discourses on culture has been a major subject of study for sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists. Anyhow, in International Relations Studies it is yet to gather much ground. The aim here is to highlight this and related phenomenon, as to understand the extent of progress that International Relations has made towards bridging this lacuna. In this line, issues like colonialism, imperialism, hegemony and soft power would be discussed.

Required Readings:


Xintian, Yun (2002), ‘The Role of Soft Power in International Relations’. *Chinese Philosophical Studies*, Asia Series, 3(20) (www.cultural policy.org)

**Week VII:**

**Moving further, this week focuses upon the processes of the identity formation of postcolonial States. The main focus here would be to understand the Emergence of postcolonial State in South Asia and the evolution of its identity as a region.**

**Required Readings:**


Week IX:

In this week, we attempt at understanding the broad framework of the turf upon which the subtle nuances of identity politics are played out in International Relations. We will try here to conceptualize the major grounds upon which contemporary International Relations have witnessed identity as key determining force in shaping the politics among Nation-States. These include issues such as the role of the Nation-State in a changing world, Nationalism, secularism, and multiculturalism.

Required Readings:


Week X:

This week examines the role of culture, identity and globalization on international Relations. Cultural factors have invariably influenced the trajectories of international relations since a long time. But off late, their influence has increased to manifold proportions. The advent of globalization has imparted a critical dimension to this entire process. In view of this, the examination of as to how the notion of identity has figured in the sphere of international relations becomes very crucial.

Required Readings:


Week XI:
Picking up from the last week, this week focuses as to how the post September 11 scenario, provides a significant facet to the entire process as to how cultural issues have influenced international relations. This must be understood in the context of the culture talk surrounding the issue of the global identity of Muslims and the contested notions relating to it.

Required Readings:


Lewis, Bernard(1990), ‘The Roots of Muslim Rage: Why So Many Muslims Resent the West
and Why Their Bitterness will not Easily be Mollified’, The Atlantic Monthly.  

Mamdani, Mahmood. 2002. Good Muslim and Bad Muslim: A Political Perspective of Culture  

Week XII:  
This week provides a comprehensive overview of identity politics and political differences in  
contemporary political life of South Asia. The ways in which identity figures into politics and  
politics figures into identity in South Asia would be discussed by engaging with issues such as  
identity of Muslims in the post September 11 epoch, diaspora identity, the problem of refugee  
identity and the identity of the Stateless.

Required Readings:

Bates, Crispin (2001), Communities Empire and Migration: South Asians in Diaspora. New  
York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Kumar, Sanjeev H.M. (2009), ‘Post-September 11 crisis in International Relations and the State  

2013. Constructing Nation’s Enemy: Hindutva, Popular Culture and the Muslim Other in  
Bollywood Cinema, Third World Quarterly, 35 (4)

Lau, Lisa and Ana Cristina Mendes (2011), (eds.) Re-orientalism and South Asian Identity  

Pemberton, Kelly and Michael Nijhawan (2009), Shared Idioms, Sacred Symbols, and the  

Rai, Rajesh and Peeter Reeves (2008), The South Asian Diaspora: Transnational Networks and  

Singh, Deepak K. (2010), The Stateless in South Asia: The Chakmas between Bangladesh and  
India. New Delhi: Sage India.

Taylor, David and Malcolm Yapp (1979), (eds.) Political Identity in South Asia. London:  
Cambridge University Press.

Recommended Readings:


