POSC 1001 – Critical Reading and Writing in Political Science

Theme: Issues in the study of nationalism

Instructor: Dr. Valérie Vézina
E-mail: Through D2L
Office: SN-2047
Office Hours: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 3:00-4:00pm or by appointment

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the research and analysis skills used in Political Science. Students can expect to learn about library research, electronic data gathering, and the elements of strong essay writing which can be applied across disciplines in the social sciences. The "political" content will vary by instructor and will address more specific topics than those ordinarily covered in 2000-level Political Science courses. Qualifies as a Research/Writing course.

Course Objectives

The course’s primary aim is to provide an overview of the reading, research and writing skills used in Political Science. This will be accomplished through reading and writing about issues of nationalism.

Grade Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Worth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Paper outline</td>
<td>January 29th</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Working draft</td>
<td>February 17th</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Peer-review critiques</td>
<td>March 11th</td>
<td>20% (2 x 10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Final essay</td>
<td>April 6th</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final exam</td>
<td>TBA</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Required Readings

Students will be expected to read all chapters of this book. It is an important resource for the essay project. Students will be specifically tested on this book’s content on the final exam.

All other required readings will be posted on D2L.

**Resources and regulations**

*Desire2Learn.* This course has a Desire2Learn (D2L) page associated with it. Access to this page is through the MUN webpages (http://online.mun.ca/). I will also use D2L for class communications.

*People with Disabilities.* The Glenn Roy Blundon Centre (mun.ca/blundon) serves students whose disabilities involve conditions affecting mobility, vision, hearing, learning, chronic illness, or mental health. Support is also provided to students with documented temporary illnesses and injuries.

*ESL Students.* The ESL Centre (mun.ca/esl) at MUN offers various forms of support to students who would like to improve their English.

*Political Science Website.* The website (mun.ca/posc) offers information about upcoming courses, sample course syllabi, work internships, international exchanges, degree requirements etc.

*Writing Centre.* The Writing Centre (mun.ca/writingcentre) is a free, drop-in facility for all Memorial University students who want help with their writing. The Centre provides individualized tutorials to students from all schools and faculties.

*Plagiarism.* Just don’t do it! The Department has advice on plagiarism (http://www.mun.ca/posc/undergraduate/planning/plagiarism.php).

*Tips for Succeeding in Political Science at MUN.* eTips (www.arts.mun.ca/etips/) is a website created by MUN political science students with tips about how do to well in political science courses. In addition to written tips there are audio clips and YouTube videos about research and writing, life in the classroom, undergraduate planning and tips for applying to graduate programs. Check out this 24/7 support tool and consider submitting tips of your own to share with others.

*Cell Phone and Laptop Use.* The use of cell phones in class is prohibited at all times unless expressly permitted by the instructor beforehand (in anticipation of an urgent phone call, etc.). Students using their phones (receiving calls, text messaging, listening to music, etc.) may be asked to leave the classroom at the instructor’s discretion.

Many students use laptops for the purpose of note-taking. While this is of course acceptable, students using their computers to surf the net or for other non-class related
activities may be asked to leave class. Repeat offenses will be dealt with in an appropriate manner.

*Class cancellation.* In the event of a class cancellation (e.g. due to bad weather), the scheduled test or assignment will be administered in the class immediately following. Students unable to write an exam or to submit an assignment on the days which they are administered may qualify—by providing valid documentation (e.g. doctor’s note) for the day in question—for a different test on a different day.

*Outline of your paper 10% (due January 29th)*

* Ch. 2 and 3 of Lisa A. Baglione’s book would be more than useful here.

This first stage of the essay is likely to be the most important. In this part, you need to submit the following elements:
- Essay topic: You should write what your paper is about, in other words, how your paper is dealing with an important issue in the study of nationalism.
- Key terms: Identify the main concepts through a list of key terms that your paper will touch upon.
- Research Question: Clearly formulate a research question
- Provide an annotated bibliography. While I am not expecting you would have read all material for your essay at this stage, I am requesting you do provide an annotated bibliography (see. Ch. 3 of Baglione’s book) with five (5) academic sources (whether books or peer-reviewed articles).

*Working draft of your paper 15% (due February 17th)*

For this stage of the essay students must be familiar with the “Final Essay” instructions provided elsewhere in this syllabus, particularly the instructions associated with the required headings. Here is a list of things to consider for this part:

- Locate literature sources relevant to the term that you selected and to the research problem you have identified. Your emphasis must be on academic sources, meaning that you will need to take books out of the library, as well as to locate journal articles online via the library website. All other sources are only a supplement and at all times you are responsible for being aware of the relative quality of the source.
- Remember, your research emphasis needs to be on scholarly literature dealing with the concept you have selected (i.e., the theory behind it) and the best way to get this information is usually from books. This is less likely to apply to your case study summary which will need to integrate very current information.
- Now that you’ve read relevant sources you can begin writing. You need to paraphrase (put in your own words) what the literature says and to document where you found the
information. Direct passages/excerpts should be rarely used because they do not demonstrate comprehension. Your findings must be presented under the categories of “Academic Theory” and “Case Study”, with considerably more emphasis on establishing awareness of the theoretical element, which involves summarizing what scholars have written.

- All of the sources that you have included in the write-up of your research findings must to be presented in a list of works cited. This requires attention to detail because your list needs to follow a standard presentation format which includes all relevant information in a consistent manner. Do not include sources whose content you have not ended up using.

- Ensure that your draft is organized under the following headings: Essay Question, Academic Theory, Case Study, Works Cited. At this stage you do not yet have to prepare an introduction or analysis so your word count should be nearly 2,000 words.

- Re-read your draft essay and adjust as necessary to improve its quality so that it more closely meets the standards identified for a final essay.

- Submit in class: three (3) paper copies of your working draft with the number and name assigned to you by the instructor – do not include your real name

*Essay: Peer Critiques 20% (/10 each, due March 11th)*

The peer review process is among the highest standards of ensuring academic rigour. It is an anonymous process whereby praise and constructive criticism is provided to an author to provide assistance in revising an essay to meet colleagues’ expectations. When the feedback from two reviewers is acted upon the result should be a significantly strengthened product that meets conventional academic standards.

The paper copies of each student’s initial essay will be distributed to two randomly selected students (“reviewers”) in the class whose identities will also remain anonymous. Students who did not submit an essay on time are highly unlikely to be included in this process. Each reviewer is to prepare a minimum 700 word commentary for both papers received. This word count does not include handwritten notations made on the paper version, which are required. Commentary may include feedback on the essay’s research problem, the quality and/or quantity of research, the writing style, errors detected (e.g., grammatical, typographical, formatting), and other suggestions for improvement.

Reviewers are required to cite relevant pages in *Writing a Research Paper in Political Science* and will be subject to a 15% penalty per critique if they do not clearly refer to tips presented in the book. While reviewers need to point out shortcomings about the essay please be sure to balance this with praise where appropriate. To preserve the integrity of the process students are requested to discourage any attempts to discover the identity of reviewers or authors and to bring any concerns immediately to the attention of the instructor.
Submit in class: (1) the two original papers you were given and (2) a paper copy of each of your written commentaries with your number/name as assigned to you by the instructor.

*Final Essay 20% (due Tuesday, April 6)*

All students who completed the initial essay and submitted critiques on time will receive a minimum of two anonymous peer critiques as well as a high-level list of “5 tips for improvement” from the instructor. Any students who did not submit two critiques on time are unlikely to receive peer critiques. Students are to draw upon the critiques and tips when redrafting their essays.

Have a look at the feedback received and prioritize what needs to be improved. In most cases this will involve reworking the initial essay considerably and potentially redrafting it completely. Additional research may be required and some rewriting may be necessary.

Use your judgment; you do not need to follow all of the reviewers’ recommendations. However, marks will be awarded for significant efforts made to improve the initial essay and act on feedback received, rather than merely the final product itself.

Develop your topic in a high quality essay that is between 2,300 and 2,800 words (excluding the list of works cited). This relatively low word count has been assigned to ensure that you develop your skills in identifying what information needs to be excluded; to write in a concise manner; and to edit and re-edit. Essays that are below or above this word count will be penalized.

You must take a position using a thesis statement, present an overview of the literature findings on this topic, perform an analysis of those findings, and prepare a conclusion. Your essay needs to be divided into five sections using the headings presented. Essays that do not include these headings will be automatically penalized 15%. Page count guidelines assume that the word count was made to fit across 9 pages and therefore are presented for illustrative purposes only (i.e., pay attention to the actual word count). Essays are to be presented in a manner consistent with the CJPS Editorial Style Guidelines (see [www.mun.ca/posc/undergraduate/planning/CJPS_guidelines_2008.pdf](http://www.mun.ca/posc/undergraduate/planning/CJPS_guidelines_2008.pdf)).

Your research must feature a selection of appropriate material (e.g., books, journals, conference papers, news articles, government reports or data, reputable Websites) that clearly contributes to the essay content.

Finally, make sure you follow the following structure:

**Introduction (approximately 2 paragraphs)**

What you need to do: Identify the research problem and present your thesis statement.
Explaination: An introduction is fairly standard for any essay. You need to state the purpose of your essay and how you are going to address the central research problem. This must include a clear thesis statement, which is the research hypothesis that you are going to evaluate using evidence you uncover through research. Generally speaking a thesis statement tends to appear as a single sentence that is often positioned at the end of a paragraph.

Scholarly Debate (approximately 4 pages)
What you need to do: Explain the purpose and function of the topic you have selected, without mentioning recent events.

Explaination: This needs to integrate considerable information from credible scholarly literature, mostly books and academic journal articles, some of which should be seminal works written years ago. The way to do this is to perform research, to read, and to summarize in your own words what you’ve read. There is a lot of literature out there so you need to be sure to edit this section to ensure that you aren’t wasting your available word count. This is perhaps the most important section of your essay because it provides the basis for analysis. It therefore must establish what the most current and relevant academic theory is. Refer to pages 45-48 and 52-55 in Writing a Research Paper.

Case Study (approximately 2 pages)
What you need to do: Summarize the issue that you have selected, paying closest attention to details that are relevant to those described in the preceding section.

Explaination: You need to integrate information from multiple sources. What else can you find to provide further insights into your case study example? The strongest essays will integrate credible scholarly literature and will begin to establish links with the academic theory literature.

Assessment and Analysis (approximately 2 pages)
What you need to do: Interpret and demonstrate comprehension of the research information presented up to this point with an aim towards accepting or rejecting the essay’s thesis statement.

Explaination: After re-reading what you’ve written above you should now be in a position to explain what all of this means in the context of addressing your thesis statement. This is where you will be demonstrating that you have reviewed a wide range of applicable literature and that you understand the difference between “what ought to be” and “what is”, and thus what could be better and/or what is idealistic/unrealistic. In other words, if you apply the academic theory information to your case study, what can be learned? There is no need for evidence of new research sources here but rather that you have put your thinking cap on. Whenever you think you might be going off topic, go back and look at the preceding sections, particularly your thesis statement, and ask yourself: how is what I am writing helping answer the question that I set out to address and is it directly related to the theory that I described earlier? This examination of the information that you
have presented should set up your conclusion as to whether your original hypothesis holds firm, if it has been shown to be partly accurate but also partly inaccurate, or if it should be rejected – any of these outcomes demonstrates improved learning and knowledge.

**Conclusion (approximately 2 paragraphs)**
What you need to do: Summarize what has been learned in relation to your thesis statement.

Explanation: Summarize what can be learned from each section as you work towards answering your thesis question. At the end of this process, a good essay will have informed its reader and in particular the author will have learned a lot from the experience.

**Works Cited (minimum 10 credible sources)**
What you need to do: Prepare a properly formatted alphabetical list of the scholarly sources referred to in the essay.

Explanation: List the full details of all of the sources that you have referred to within the body of your essay. Pay particular attention to formatting detail – the key is to be consistent in your presentation. A sloppy list of works cited, even when they are listed alphabetically by author’s last name, is usually an indication of an essay that was slapped together as well. When your list is finished you should take another look – are there enough or too many academic books? Enough academic journal articles? Any news sources? A limited selection of credible online sources? Is there a blend of old and new sources? Are there too many political biographies and news sources, and too few scholarly books and journal articles written by political scientists (or vice versa)? Have you padded the works cited or have you actually read and used the sources?

Your essay should be completed at least a week before the due date. You should then print it out and proofread the entire product. Be critical of the quality of information, the presentation and whether it has followed all of the syllabus instructions. Have you demonstrated a strong grasp of the topic? Can things be said in fewer words (e.g., can you remove adjectives? quoted passages? words ending in “ly”)? Does your assessment and analysis take the scholarly theory and apply it to the news story? Is information documented properly? Are there any typos? What other concerns might a reviewer notice?

Prioritize the concerns you identified when you proofread your essay. With the available time remaining work to fix these so that your finished essay is a polished, high quality product.

**Final Exam 35% (April)**
The final exam will be discussed during the last week of classes. It will be held during the official exam.
period on a date determined by the Registrar’s Office. It will cover all of the course’s content and will be comprised as follows.

Part 1: Issues in the study of nationalism
- Close-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice)
- Short essay questions

Part 2: Essay critiquing
- Essay content, structure, formatting

**Tentative Course Outline**

The following schedule lists the readings chronologically for the duration of the course. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the schedule as appropriate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>January 4</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Ch. 1 (Baglione)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>January 11</td>
<td>Choosing a topic? A dream or a nightmare...</td>
<td>Ch. 2 (Baglione)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Note: Wednesday and Friday, class will meet at the QEII Library (L-2028)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>January 18</td>
<td>How to find relevant sources (summary of library sessions)</td>
<td>Ch. 3 (Baglione)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The nation: a modern conception</td>
<td>Gellner (ch. 1 &amp; 7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Critique: Meadwell</td>
<td>Guibernau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>January 25</td>
<td>Summarizing the literature</td>
<td>Ch. 4 (Baglione)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The nation as an ‘imagined community’</td>
<td>Anderson (ch. 1 &amp; 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Friday:</strong> Outline due</td>
<td>Critique: Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>February 1</td>
<td>A thesis?! An Hypothesis?!</td>
<td>Ch. 5 (Baglione)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The ‘ethnic’ nation</td>
<td>Smith (ch. 1 &amp; 2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>February 8</td>
<td>Writing, writing, writing!</td>
<td>Ch. 6, Ch. 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 February</td>
<td>Beyond the ‘nation’&lt;br&gt;TBD: The Writing Centre will offer tips on how to effectively write a paper and will come to class to give a lecture.</td>
<td>Brubaker Critique: Calhoun</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 February</td>
<td><strong>Monday</strong>: Individual meetings (there will be no lecture, but I will be available during class time to meet with you if you have any question regarding your first draft)&lt;br&gt;<strong>Wednesday</strong>: Working draft due</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 February</td>
<td>Applying theories of nationalism to case-studies</td>
<td>Shazad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March</td>
<td>Applying theories of nationalism to case-studies&lt;br&gt;<strong>Friday</strong>: Critiques due</td>
<td>Molnar Barreto</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 March</td>
<td>To integrate or not integrate? How to cope with critiques.</td>
<td>Ch. 8 (Baglione)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 March</td>
<td><strong>Wednesday/Friday</strong>: Individual meetings (sign-up sheets)</td>
<td>Ch. 9 (Baglione)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 March</td>
<td>Editing your paper&lt;br&gt;<strong>No class</strong>: individual meetings (cont.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 April</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Gagnon &amp; Grégoire</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 April</td>
<td>EXAM PERIOD</td>
<td>Final Exam to be determined by the registrar’s office</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>