ANP 491 (4 credits) Special Topics: Ethnicity, Nationalism and Changing Identity in Europe

A. Course Description

Language, religion, region and nation have been features of European identity for centuries. The emergence of the European Union as a supranational state and the arrival of immigrants from former colonies and the developing world are forcing Europeans to once again reexamine their collective identities at multiple levels. Citizens of the European Union are now “Europeans” even as they remain French or British. As the role of the nation state is being circumscribed by membership in the European Union, presumably older regional and subnational identities, such as Scots or Alsatian or Ch’tis, are being rediscovered whether for tourism, economic cooperation, or political mobilization. In addition, the need to integrate immigrants from Eastern Europe and particularly Muslims from North Africa, Turkey and the Middle East poses a problem of every European country.

As Olivier Roy observes in Islam and Secularism, the “problems” with Islam differ from one country to the next suggesting that the underlying “problem” derives from the specificity of the host country, not from Islam itself. A French tourist arriving at London Heathrow is likely to be greeted by a customs agent wearing a headscarf, which are banned in France. To understand the complexity of the issue, we will examine the “problems” of immigrant integration in the two countries we will be visiting on this program: France and Belgium. The French emphasis on citizenship and laïcité limits religious expression in the public sphere and suppresses subnational identities – ethnic, religious and linguistic. In Belgium, the bilingual compromise between French-speaking Walloons in the south and Dutch-speaking Flemish in the north that created the nation is slowly unraveling. For immigrants, Belgium presents a mix of often contradictory assimilationist and multicultural policies that differ between the Wallonia and Flanders.

Students will become familiar with the changes of French and Belgian identities through readings, films and field trips to experience firsthand the way historical sites and museums serve to interpret and represent the ‘national’ identities and how these interpretations influence their response to immigrants. Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Perspectives by Thomas Eriksen and selected readings from Ethnic Groups and Boundaries by Fredrik Barth will provide the theoretical framework for the course. Why the French Don’t Like Headscarves by the anthropologist John Bowen will examine the interaction between Muslim immigrants and French society, while field trips will provide a historical perspective. We will examine the history of the Belgium through a series of articles concluding with a study of immigrants in Flanders. Regional and ethnolinguistic identities will be examined by field trips in Alsace and in the Pas-de-Calais in the film Welcome to the Sticks (Bienvenue chez les Ch’tis).

In this course we will examine…

1) The development and dynamics of regional and linguistic identity in history of Strasbourg and Alsace from the Middle Ages to its incorporation as a linguistically distinct but politically integrated part of Revolutionary France. This will include visits to the Musée historique de Strasbourg and the Musée d’Alsace that are essential to understanding the origins of the ethnic markers used in contemporary Alsatian that emerged during the German occupation.
2) The impact of the German occupation of Alsace during the late 19th century that changed the face of Strasbourg as Germany sought to establish its ethno-historical claims. This will be illustrated by a visit to Haut Koeningsburg, a medieval castle rebuilt by Wilhelm II and public buildings throughout the city.

3) The use of ethnicity and language to justify the invasion by Hitler who sought to eradicate French language and culture, to reincorporate the region into Germany, and to justify the conscription of Alsatians into the German army. Students will experience the impact of this first hand by visits to the Alsace Moselle Memorial at Schirmek that remembers the period from 1870 to the end of World War II and to Struthoff (Natzwiller) where French resistance fighters entered the Nazi concentration camp system.

4) Examine how the present of immigrant communities have impacted on France and Belgium since the two countries are fundamentally different in their conceptions of themselves as societies politically and socially with different colonial histories (regional: Congo vs. North Africa) and approaches to integration and multiculturalism.

5) The history and features of French and Flemish identities in Belgium and the political dynamics shaping these relations and the role of the European Union in the (re)emergence of other regional identities in France and the changing relationship between French-speakers and Flemish speakers in Belgium.

B. Learning Objectives

Students will…

6) Understand the influence of history, geography, religion, gender, race, ethnicity, and other factors on their identities and the identities of others and demonstrate awareness of how diversity emerges within and across cultures.

C. Required Readings

The following books are available through Amazon.com. Depending on price and availability, there may be a course pack containing selected readings from Barth and Ceuppens.

Books


Chapters (Course Pack)


E-Resources (permanent links provided on course website)


Films

• Battle for Algiers (DVD – 2004)
• Bienvenue Chez Les Ch'tis (Welcome to the Sticks) (DVD – 2009)
• Caché (DVD – 2006)
• Days of Glory (Indigènes) (DVD – 2007)
• La Haine (DVD - 2005)
• Inch’Allah Dimanche (DVD - 2005)
• The Spanish Apartment (DVD – 2002)

D. Reading and Discussion Schedule

**Site Visits/Field Trips.** Field trips and participant observation activities will be an important component of the program. Whenever possible the instructor will accompany the students and when not students will be given specific tasks or objectives to accomplish, which will be recorded as reflection papers or in short essays. The OSA standard two-hour field experience equals one-hour of class time will be observed.

In addition to touring sites of general interest such as the European Parliament in Strasbourg, we will also visit museums which reflect the colonial legacy of France and Belgium. While in Strasbourg, students will visit Haut Koeningsburg castle, the Alsace Moselle Memorial at Schirmek, and Struthoff (Natzwiller). While in Brussels, there will be a field trip to Ypres and the In Flanders Fields museum
where students can experience the scale and horror of a World War I battlefield to understand the European commitment to end war in Europe.

**Films** provide a unique window into the less public aspects of French and immigrant North African society. While most of the films related to the North African experience, *Bienvenue Chez Les Ch’tis* provides a pleasant diversion and insight into the use of a *patois* that has become a marker of regional identity. Like field trips, films are part of the core experience and all students will be required to take notes while viewing them, be prepared to discuss them from the perspective of the course, and to write reflections on them. Because viewing and re-viewing films will require the students’ full attention, time spent on film will be treated as 75% of class time, so viewing a 90 minute film will count as one course hour.

**Discussion and Readings** will occupy a majority of our time. Readings will be organized thematically and supplemented with field trips and films. Students will be expected to prepare written reflections on these activities to facilitate discussion. In the first part of the course, we will focus on theories of ethnicity and nationalism using the development of Strasbourg and Alsace and the tension between regional and national identity to appreciate the French approach to nation. The second part will deal with immigration and assimilation particularly as it relates to North African, Muslim immigrants and the problems this community poses for the French view of citizenship. We will then turn our attention to the formation of Belgium as a bilingual confederation and how this poses a different set of opportunities and challenges for the immigrant community. Finally, we will address the larger question of European citizenship and test the applicability of the various theoretical models discussed to the interpretation of the multilayered European identities.

**E. General Stuff**

- *Regular attendance in class is required.* Students, who miss class, arrive late or leave early will be considered absent. Students with more than two unexcused absences during the semester can expect to see their final grade lowered (see below).
- *Papers and projects are due on time.* Students will submit written materials in class. Points will be deducted for late assignments.
- *Assigned Readings.* Students are expected to have read the material assigned for the day of class, to take part in class discussion and in class activities, including pop quizzes and should bring their laptops to class.
- *Communication is essential.* If you have any concerns or difficulty with the course, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I can be reached by email (handrick@msu.edu) or in class.
- *Religious observances will be respected.* MSU is a diverse community with members from diverse faiths. I will make every effort to schedule exams and otherwise ensure that no one is penalized for absence due to a religious observance. I do request, however, that students who plan to miss class for religious observances notify me by email one week in advance to help me avoid conflicts.

**F. Serious Stuff - Academic Honesty**

Cheating on examinations will not be tolerated. Section 1.00 Protection of Scholarship and Grades of the General Student Regulations in the MSU Student Handbook specifically addresses the question of cheating on examinations. Students found in violation of these guidelines will be censured, including a failing grade on the assignment or in the course.

**G. Assessment and Grades**

Grades will be based on a combination of factors including participation and attendance, written assignments and a final paper each with an assigned Grade Point value.
Participation/Attendance (30 Grade Points)

My goal is to create an open, respectful and comfortable environment where students can feel free to express their views. This requires active and positive participation in group discussions and activities and the completion of assigned readings and other preparatory activities prior to class. Students who are not prepared for class or do not contribute to discussion or in-class activities can expect to see their Grade Point reduced.

Reflection Papers/Short Essays (30 Grade Points)

Students will be asked to prepare reflection papers or short essays on specific topics related to the readings or to material presented to class, or to prepare questions and comments on the assigned readings for group discussion. Reflection papers will be marked on a ten point scale: ten points for satisfactory completion of assignment; five points if incomplete or late; zero points if missing. Short essays may be marked on a different scale. The total grade points for these activities will be based on the percentage of points earned divided by the total possible points.

Final Paper (40 Grade Points)

In consultation with the instructor, each student will decide on a topic of special interest prior to the start of the program. By the end of the first week, he or she will submit a statement describing the problem, identifying the broader theoretical context, and describing how s/he plans to research it. By the end of the third week, the student will submit an outline of the final paper along with an introduction, summary of the relevant literature, and comments on the state of the research. This is an iterative process; each draft will be marked and critiqued by the instructor to indicate progress but the grade will be based solely on the final draft.

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Final Grade

Your final grade will be based on the total number of Grade Points you earn during the semester based on the following scale.

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