

# POLITICAL THEORIES OF MEMBERSHIP

GNDR\_ST 490 / POLI\_SCI 490



As nationalist rhetorics, parties, and politicians ascend to positions of authority in regimes worldwide, political theorists are debating the meanings, etiologies, and treatments of nationalism and, relatedly, a resurgent antipathy toward immigrants. This course reviews key political and anthropological theories of membership in political societies since antiquity to address foundational questions about political membership, such as: why do all political societies use birth (*jus sanguinis* or *jus soli*) as the paradigmatic decision rule for membership? What are the implications of this decision rule for attachments of nationality, ethnicity, race, and religion? What are the similarities and differences among these groups, heuristically and politically? What is the intellectual history of “the nation” and the claims that it is modern? Is the nation an inherently toxic form of membership that produces unjustified exclusions at best and genocide at worst? Or is there a form of national belonging that cultivates empathy and mutual care among economically and otherwise unequal members, such that the nation may and should be preserved but should be isolated from its adverse effects? The course will review G.W.F. Hegel’s attack on social contract theories of belonging and war. We will conclude by reading queer and post-colonial criticisms and defenses of native or indigenous nations and communities.

Jackie Stevens

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Th 9:30am–12:20pm  
Scott Hall 107