

ID7002 Questions of Identity in Europe – Part 2

Module type Compulsory (core module)

Term / hours Hilary / 22

ECTS 10

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Lecturer(s) Dr Balázs Apor
Dr Catherine Barbour
Prof Clodagh Brook
Dr Hannes Opelz
Dr Zuleika Rodgers

Module description

Together with its sister module (Part 1), this module explores the question of identity by providing students with a strong theoretical grounding in key issues of identity in Europe. The module is taught by a team of colleagues, each exploring a different identity-based topic. The standard format for each topic includes one 2-hr introductory lecture/seminar on the theoretical implications of the topic, followed by one 2-hr seminar looking at case studies (this format may vary depending on the topic). Topics explored in this module are listed below.

Syllabus

1. Who are they? (Dr Zuleika Rodgers)

These seminars address the discourse around the construct of group identity and the 'other' in European society. In particular, this core topic examines the politics of difference based on genealogy, geography and religion, exploring both ancient and modern examples of the phenomenon. After a theoretical and historical survey, Jews and Judaism are taken as a case study.

2. Nations and nationalism (Dr Balázs Apor)

These seminars focus on the construction and development of national identities in Europe in modern times with a particular emphasis on the homogenising aspects of modern nationalism. The two cases studies discussed in the framework of this topic address the constructed nature of national identities in the context of the Soviet Union, and the most extreme outcome of nationalism's homogenising ambitions: genocide.

3. Intersectional Identities (Dr Catherine Barbour)

In these seminars we will engage with key debates in contemporary feminism and gender studies, drawing on the framework of intersectionality to examine how gender interacts with minoritized and non-state identities. In what ways are issues relating to language, nation, community and migration informed by discourses of gender? How do tensions between 'centre' and 'periphery' play out when interrogated through an intersectional feminist lens? If the nation is a heteropatriarchal

construct, how do women writers envisage the collective imaginary, particularly in the context of minority languages and cultures? Our case studies consist of a range of texts written by women from Galicia, north-west Spain, a non-state nation where national identity is both highly contested and contentious.

4. I still believe (Prof Clodagh Brook)

Religion has been instrumental in the creation of contemporary socio-political Europe. It has been held responsible for some of the darkest moments in recent history, from the Holocaust to Jihad. But it has also been described as the creator of a forceful heritage of architectural and artistic works, from monasteries and cathedrals to the Vatican treasures, from paintings, sculptures and frescos to the rich imagery and narratives on which writers and poets have drawn for centuries, and upon which filmmakers to the present day still draw. In these seminars, we concentrate on how post-secular theories of religion try to understand the continuing place of religion in Europe after secularisation. After an introductory class, we look at case studies of Italy, through discussion of sociological texts and of representation of religious identity on screen.

5. The Brain Identity (Dr Hannes Opelz)

These seminars explore some of the ways in which recent developments in neurobiology and philosophy are changing our understanding of human identity. The seminars examine a selection of works by contemporary philosopher Catherine Malabou, with a particular focus on her concept of plasticity. Key issues to be discussed are the ways in which brain plasticity relates to capitalism, trauma, and artificial intelligence.

Conclusion: Beyond Identity (Dr Hannes Opelz)

This seminar serves as a conclusion to the core modules. It will also give students an opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the module, particularly in relation to their course work in the run-up to submission.

Assessment

The module is assessed by completing two assignments:

- (1) A piece of reflective writing (1,500 words) in response to the workshop (worth 20%), to be submitted by the Friday of Teaching Week 10 (Calendar Week 31);
- (2) An essay (3,500 words) on one of the core topics studied in the module (worth 80%), to be submitted by the Friday of Trinity Week (Calendar Week 35).

For more details on the assessment of this module (presentation guidelines, sample essay titles, etc.), please consult the module on Blackboard.

Please note: students who are *not* enrolled in the Identities & Cultures of Europe programmes (and who therefore join this module from other degree programmes) are exempt from completing the first component of the above assessment (i.e. the piece of reflective writing). They are thus required to complete only the second component (i.e. the essay), worth 100% in their case.

Indicative bibliography

Topic 1

Boyarin, J., *The Unconverted Self: Jews, Indians, and the Identity of Christian Europe* (Chicago UP, 2009).

Cheyette, B. and Marcus, I. (eds), *Modernity, Culture, and 'the Jew'* (Stanford UP, 1998).

Goldberg, C. A., *Modernity and the Jews in Western Social Thought* (Chicago UP, 2017).

Topic 2

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (Verso, 1983).

Kaye, James, and Stråth, Bo, *Enlightenment and Genocide: Contradictions of Modernity* (Peter Lang, 2000).

Martin, Terry, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Cornell UP, 2001).

Topic 3

Marica Campo, *Memoir for Xoana*, trans. by Kathleen March (Small Stations Press, 2021).

Eva Moreda, *Home Is Like A Different Time*, trans. by Craig Patterson (Francis Boutle Publishers, 2019).

Topic 4

Braidotti, Rosi, ed., *Transformations of Religion and the Public Sphere: Postsecular Publics* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

Brook, Clodagh, *Screening Religions in Italy: Contemporary Italian Cinema and Television in the Post-secular Public Sphere* (University of Toronto Press, 2019).

Habermas, Jürgen, 'Notes on a Post-Secular Society', *Sign and Sight*, 2008 [online, open access].

Topic 5

Malabou, Catherine, *What Should We Do with Our Brain?*, trans. Sebastian Rand (Fordham UP, 2008 [2004]).

Malabou, Catherine, *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Polity Press, 2012 [2009]).

Malabou, Catherine, *Morphing Intelligence: From IQ Measurements to Artificial Intelligence*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Columbia UP, 2019 [2017]).

Learning outcomes

Upon successful completion of this module, students should be able to:

- LO1 Identify and describe identity issues as they emerge in a range of cultural manifestations across Europe and beyond.
- LO2 Compare and contrast different methodological approaches to questions of identity.
- LO3 Accurately and critically deploy key concepts drawn from the various fields and disciplines covered in the core topics.
- LO4 Critically assess textual and audio-visual forms through systematic reflection and close reading of select passages from various works and artefacts.
- LO5 Develop critical and analytical skills through reflective and academic writing.