

POU33212 — Identity Politics and Political Competition

Module Information	
Module Code	<i>POU33212</i>
Module Title	<i>Identity Politics and Political Competition</i>
Department	<i>Political Science</i>
Year Group	<i>Junior Sophister</i>
Module Personnel	<i>Dr. Violeta Haas</i>
Academic Year	<i>2026–27</i>
Credit Weighting	<i>5 credits</i>
Semester	<i>Semester 2</i>
Contact Hours	<i>2 lectures per week</i>

Module Content	
Module Description	<i>Why has identity become such a powerful force in contemporary politics? From immigration and religion to gender and sexuality, questions of who belongs increasingly structure how citizens vote, how parties compete, and how elites mobilize support. This module examines the relationship between identity politics and political competition. We begin by asking what identity politics is and why it has gained prominence across established democracies. We then investigate how political elites strategically activate group identities (through anti-minority appeals, wedge issues, and symbolic politics) and how these strategies reshape party systems, electoral coalitions, and the quality of democratic representation. Throughout, we pay close attention to the consequences for marginalized groups, including immigrant and LGBTQ+ communities. Adopting a quantitative, empirical lens, students engage with cutting-edge research in comparative politics and political behavior, drawing on experimental and observational evidence. Beyond theoretical knowledge, the course introduces the research designs and data used to study identity and competition, equipping students to critically evaluate empirical claims about one of the defining issues of our time.</i>
Learning Outcomes	<i>By the end of this module, students will be able to:</i>

Module Content	
	- <i>Demonstrate a well-developed knowledge of the theoretical and empirical literature on identity politics, group-based appeals, and their role in political competition.</i> - <i>Critically assess how political elites and parties mobilize social identities, such as ethnicity, religion, immigration status, gender, and sexuality, to compete for votes.</i> - <i>Evaluate the consequences of identity-based competition for party systems, democratic representation, polarization, and marginalized communities.</i> - <i>Apply theoretical insights and empirical research designs to analyze contemporary cases of identity politics, and critically interpret quantitative evidence.</i>
Indicative Reading / Resources	TBA

Assessment	
Assessment Components	30% Participation, 10% Position Paper / Problem Set, 60% Research Proposal
Assessment Details	<i>I: Active Participation (Attendance, Readings & Weekly Comments)</i> <i>Active participation is central to this module. Participants are expected to attend and to have read the assigned readings prior to class, and should be able to engage critically with the material. Class sessions are designed as a forum for clarification and discussion, not for extensive summaries and recaps of the readings. Participants are expected to upload weekly comments before class. These comments should focus on the required readings and are intended to promote discussion; they can be critiques, questions, or reflective thoughts. Participants may skip a week's comment using up to two Jokers throughout the semester.</i> <i>II: Position Paper or Problem Set</i> <i>Participants should prepare a short position paper for one of the sessions. In this paper, participants are asked to express and defend an opinion based on the readings, for example, by</i>

Assessment

(dis)agreeing with the authors' key arguments, assessing their usefulness for explaining current political developments, or taking sides when readings present conflicting findings. You should be prepared to discuss the views you expressed with your classmates.

III: Research Proposal

The final requirement for the module is a research proposal for an empirical study. Participants will: 1) formulate a clear research question, 2) critically synthesize the current state of the literature, 3) develop a coherent theoretical argument, and 4) outline an empirical approach to addressing the question (including case selection, methodology, and data sources; full implementation is not required).

Additional Information

Prerequisites

None

Co-requisites

None

Any other information

None