

University of Toronto
Faculty of Arts and Science
Department of Political Science

Winter 2026

Topics in Comparative Politics IV - *Identities* **POL 492H1**

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Class time: Thursday 11-1pm

Office Hours:

The broad goal of this seminar is to raise and explore important questions about identities. We will explore how identities are formed, how they evolve over time, what identities do in political economic life or what do people do with identities in political economic life. We will also examine why some identities are more politically salient than others, and what the epistemological and ethical consequences of various ways of conceptualizing identities are. We will discuss readings that focus on Africa, the Americas, Asia and the Europe.

Format: This seminar will be driven by student participation. Students should complete all readings before each class and be ready to critically engage with assigned readings as well as with the comments of other class participants. Readings are available through the Quercus site for the class or through University of Toronto libraries.

ASSESSMENT

- *Class attendance and participation (22%)* Beginning in the second week each student will be awarded 1 point for attendance and 0-1 point for participation during each class. Participation rooted in prior reading of the materials for a class, critical reflections on these materials and the connection of these with other readings covered during the course will attract the highest participation scores.
- *Class presentation (10%):* Students will pair up to present for 5 minutes on the readings for the class during which they will present. These presentations should be critical reflections and should not summarize the readings. Presentations that summarize the readings will attract low scores. Students will form pairs on their own and will then draw lots in class on week one to decide the order of presentations.

- *Midterm paper (30%):* You will have one week to write and submit an essay (6 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12) on one of two topics/prompts/questions proposed by the instructor. All papers must be submitted online by 9am on **March 5, 2026** on Quercus. This is a hard deadline. A 2% penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions.
- *Final paper (38%):* You will have around three weeks to write and submit an essay (6 double-spaced pages each, Times New Roman, font 12) on one of two topics/prompts/questions proposed by the instructor. All papers must be submitted online by 9am on **April 15, 2026** on Quercus. This is a hard deadline. A 2% penalty will be assessed each day, including weekends on all unauthorized late submissions. Students will receive the topics/prompts/questions by **March 18, 2026**.

ABSENCE: Students who absent themselves from class should complete the Absence Declaration form available to them directly on ACORN. Students should also inform the instructor of their absence.

EXTENSIONS: The deadlines for submission of assignments are hard deadlines. Extensions will only be granted in extraordinary circumstances.

PLAGIARISM and submission of examination papers: “Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with accordingly. For further clarification and information on plagiarism please see Writing at the University of Toronto <http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources>”.

“Normally, students will be required to submit their course essays to the University’s plagiarism detection tool for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the tool’s reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the University’s use of this tool are described on the Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation web site (<https://uoft.me/pdt-faq>).”

ACCESSIBILITY NEEDS: The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns, please visit <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca/> as soon as possible.

Week 1: (Jan 8) Monday May 5: Essentialism and its critics

- Senghor, L.S., 1956. African-negro aesthetics. *Diogenes*, 4(16), pp.23-38.

- Mbembé, J-A. "African modes of self-writing." *Public Culture* 14, no. 1 (2002): 239-273.
- Diagne, S.B., 2001. Africanity as an open question. *Identity and beyond: Rethinking Africanity*, pp.19-24.

Week 2: (Jan 15): Creoleness

- Bernabé, J., Chamoiseau, P., Confiant, R. and Khyar, M.B.T., 1990. In praise of creoleness. *Callaloo*, pp.886-909.
- Caplan, L., 1995. Creole world, purist rhetoric: Anglo-Indian cultural debates in colonial and contemporary Madras. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, pp.743-762.

Week 3: (Jan 22): The antecedents

- Scott, J.C., 2009. *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. Yale University Press. (selected chapters)

Week 4: (Jan 29): The (legal) labor of bounding identities

- Harris, Cheryl I. "Whiteness as property." *Harvard law review* (1993): 1707-1791.
- Scott, Rebecca J. "Paper thin: Freedom and re-enslavement in the diaspora of the Haitian Revolution." *Law and History Review* 29.4 (2011): 1061-1087.

Week 5 (Feb 5): Ownership of cultural and biological matter

- Dougherty, Terence. "Group Rights to Cultural Survival: Intellectual Property Rights in Native American Cultural Symbols." *Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev.* 29 (1997): 355.
- Bodeker, Gerard. "Traditional Medical Knowledge, Intellectual Property Rights and Benefit Sharing." *Cardozo J. Int'l & Comp. L.* 11 (2003): 785.
- Marchant, Gary E. "Property rights and benefit-sharing for DNA donors." *Jurimetrics* 45 (2004): 153.

Week 6: (Feb 12): Intimate entanglements

- Krishnan, S., 2023. Carceral domesticities and the geopolitics of Love Jihad. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 41(6), pp.995-1012.

- Jawad, H. and Elmali-Karakaya, A., 2020. Interfaith marriages in Islam from a woman's perspective: Turkish women's interfaith marriage practices in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 40(1), pp.128-147.
- Sian, K.P., 2021. "Love Jihad", "Forced" Conversion Narratives, and Interfaith Marriage in the Sikh Diaspora. *Religions*, 12(12), p.1085.

Week 7 (Feb 26) : Infrastructure for/of segregation

- Archer, D.N., 2020. "White Men's Roads through Black Men's Homes": Advancing Racial Equity through Highway Reconstruction. *Vand. L. Rev.*, 73, p.1259.
- Pesses, M.W., 2017. Road less traveled: Race and American automobility. *Mobilities*, 12(5), pp.677-691.
- Bayor, R.H., 1988. Roads to racial segregation: Atlanta in the twentieth century. *Journal of Urban History*, 15(1), pp.3-21.

Week 8 (March 5): Segregating the dead

- Luria, K.P., 2001. Separated by death? Burials, cemeteries, and confessional boundaries in seventeenth-century France. *French Historical Studies*, 24(2), pp.185-222.
- Christopher, A.J., 1995. Segregation and cemeteries in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. *Geographical Journal*, pp.38-46.
- Wirén, J., 2023. Until death do us part?: Swedish cemeteries from an inter-faith and non-faith perspective. *Approaching Religion*, 13(1), pp.123-137.

Week 9: (March 12): Cemeteries, genocide and memorialization

- Krikler, N., 2023. Killing the dead: The logic of cemetery destruction during genocidal campaigns. *Nations and Nationalism*, 29(4), pp.1338-1354.
- Hanson, I., 2024. Mass Graves: The Forensic Investigation of the Deaths, Destruction and Deletion of Communities and Their Heritage. In *War and the Historic Environment* (pp. 231-273). Routledge.
- Mwambari, D., 2020. Music and the politics of the past: Kizito Mihigo and music in the commemoration of the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. *Memory studies*, 13(6), pp.1321-1336.

Week 10 (March 19): Democracy and mass murder

- Mann, M., 1999. The dark side of democracy: the modern tradition of ethnic and political cleansing. *New Left Review*, pp.18-45.
- Lang, J., 2006. Genocide in the shadow of democracy: The Psycho-Politics of Modern Mass Murder. *Psyke & Logos*, 27(1), p.17.

Week 11 (March 26): Incompleteness

- Nyamnjoh, F.B., 2017. Incompleteness: Frontier Africa and the currency of conviviality. *Journal of Asian and African studies*, 52(3), pp.253-270.
- Nyamnjoh, F.B., 2022. Citizenship, incompleteness and mobility. *Citizenship Studies*, 26(4-5), pp.592-598.

Week 12: (April 2) Wednesday June 4: Xenophilia

- Napier, A. David. 2017. "Epidemics and xenophobia, or, why xenophilia matters," *Social Research* 84(1): 59-81.
- Napier, A. David. 2012. "Nonsensical help: how immunology might reframe the Enlightenment," *Cultural Anthropology* 27(1): 122-37.