Political and Social Theory of Boundaries: 
Citizenship, Territory, Ethnicity

Thursdays 13:00 – 15:00
Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana
Please register with: Monika.Rzemieniecka@EUI.eu

Most political science and political theory takes political boundaries for granted. The territorial borders and membership boundaries of states define the units that are compared with each other in comparative political science and whose relations with each other are studied in international relations.

In this seminar we will read and discuss social and political theories that examine instead boundary structures and processes. We will focus especially on boundaries that demarcate territorial jurisdictions and determine the citizens of democratic polities and on phenomena such as migration, secession and supranational integration that have been described as instances of boundary crossing, shifting and blurring. We will not only consider state boundaries but also nested multilevel polities and the specific conceptions of territory and membership at local and regional levels.

The seminar literature mixes explanatory social theories with normative political ones. Questions about the legitimacy of boundaries and their impact on domestic and global justice should not be disconnected from theoretical accounts of the historical evolution and social construction of boundaries.

The seminar pursues three goals: First, participants will be encouraged to explore how a boundary perspective might be relevant for their own research. Second, the seminar aims to familiarize participants with methods and styles of normative analytical arguments. Third, the seminar wants to provide opportunities for participants to develop teaching skills by leading the discussion on a particular theme.

Participants are expected:
• to read all the texts marked as required reading
• to prepare a reaction paragraph on the readings for each week and send it to the research assistant by Tuesday noon
• to read all reaction paragraphs and engage actively in discussions in class
• to introduce one seminar topic to the class on the basis of additional readings

If you want to take the seminar for credit, you need to write a seminar/term paper of about 5,000 words. Outlines of about 500 words must be sent before 5 December 2013. The full paper has to be submitted by 10 January 2014 to Monika.Rzemieniecka@eui.eu.

If you want to audit the seminar without full participation, you need to register and do the readings for the units that you want to attend.
(0) Preparatory meeting, 2 October 10:00 – 10:30 (Seminar Room 4, Badia Fiesolana)

In this meeting we will discuss the format and requirements, including the reading duties and reaction paragraphs for week 1. All registered participants have to participate in the preparatory meeting.

1) 10 October: Boundary processes and mechanism (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

(Special speaker: Stefano Bartolini)

In the first meeting we examine political boundaries conceptually and discuss Stefano Bartolini’s analysis of boundary processes, which links A.O. Hirschman’s theory of exit, voice and loyalty with Stein Rokkan’s theory of state formation.

Required reading:

Additional reading:

(2) 17 October: The Democratic Boundary Paradox (please note a different time slot: 8:45-11:00, Seminar Room 4, Badia Fiesolana)

In the second meeting we will discuss a puzzle about democracy: Can democracies determine their own boundaries democratically? If the answer is no, what alternative principles of inclusion can provide legitimacy to democratic boundaries?

Required reading:

Additional reading:

(3) 24 October: National citizenship and international migration (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

Do immigrants have a claim to citizenship? This proposition has been widely supported by political theorists, but does it also correspond to international legal trends?
Required reading:

Additional reading:


(4) 31 October: Boundaries of the Franchise: Non-citizen and non-resident voting rights (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

Traditionally, democratic theory and practice assumes that the franchise belongs to all adult citizens who reside in the state where an election is held. This assumption has been challenged by two recent trends: a strong global trend of extending voting rights to citizens residing abroad and a weaker European trend introducing voting rights for non-citizen residents in local and regional elections. How can we explain these expanded boundaries of the demos? Are there normative arguments that can justify them both?

Required reading:

Additional reading:


(5) 7. November: Citizenship beyond the state: urban, regional and supranational (Seminar Room 4, Badia Fiesolana)

Can we apply theories of citizenship in a meaningful way to polities that are not states? What are the membership boundaries of municipalities, sub-state regions and the supranational European Union? And are there normative reasons why they differ across levels in territorially nested polities?

Required reading:

Additional reading:


(6) 14. November: Cultural Boundaries of Citizenship (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

(Guest speaker: Liav Orgad)

What is the range of meanings of the term “assimilation”? From a liberal, communitarian, republican, and cosmopolitan perspective, what degree of assimilation may/should/must a state require from an immigrant who is seeking entry/naturalization? Should there be a common EU assimilation policy? What is a "citizenship test" and what purpose(s) should it serve? How legitimate is it for a political community to restrict migration to preserve its cultural essentials? What should be the function of migration law in constitutional design?

The guest speaker will introduce the topic. Two seminar participants will prepare short commentaries based on the required reading and two of the additional texts.

Required reading:

Additional reading:

(7) 21. November: Ethnic Boundaries, immigration and cultural nationalism (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

The boundaries of nations have generally been constructed on the basis of shared ethnicity or culture. However, cultural and ethnic boundaries are often also socially constructed for political purposes. How sticky are ethnic origins in western immigration states? Is ethno-cultural nationalism inherently illiberal or can it be accommodated through non-territorial forms of political autonomy?

Required reading:

Additional reading:


(8) 28. November: Territorial Rights and Resources (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

Territorial sovereignty of states involves a claim to general jurisdiction in the territory and to its natural resources. How are territorial rights different from, or connected to property rights in land? Are states’ rights to natural resources morally arbitrary and should benefits from these be globally redistributed? Do states whose territory has been submerged due to global climate change have a right to relocation?

Required reading:

Additional reading:


(9) 5. December: Territorial boundaries and secession (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

The territorial borders of states are assumed to be stable over time. Most states claim a right to territorial integrity that rules out unilateral secessions. Political theorists have challenged this by defending secession rights on grounds of consent, grievance or national identity. We will subdivide the class into three debating groups, each of which will defend one of these positions.

Required reading:


(10) 12. December: Concluding Roundtable: Political Boundaries in Political and Social Science Research (Seminar Room 3, Badia Fiesolana)

For the final meeting of the seminar, participants will prepare a short outline on a topic of their choice that connects to their research topics or interests and raises an empirical or normative research question. The format should be that of an abstract for a proposed journal article. The outlines will be grouped thematically and discussed in class.