



The Study of Ideology in Politics and International Relations

Workshop, 3rd term 2015-2016

23 – 24 May 2016

Seminar room 3, Badia Fiesolana

Organised by Jennifer Welsh, with Malte Hergaden, Joao Labareda and Patrice Wangen

Guest speakers: Siniša Malešević, University College Dublin
Jonathan Maynard, University of Oxford

Please register [online](#)

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Description

The purpose of this workshop is to explore the meaning and utility of the concept ideology. Particularly, we will reflect on the relation between a holistic understanding of ideology that was developed in various branches of neo-Marxist thinking on the one hand, and a narrower understanding that is used in more positivist research on the other hand. Are they fundamentally separate ideas or just gradually different? Can they be reconciled, or are they incommensurable? Was it fruitful to abandon the holistic conception of ideology in mainstream Political Science and International Relations, or is there promise in a revival of a more fundamental understanding or critique of ideology? If yes, how can such approaches communicate their importance to the mainstream of the field?

However, what do we think of when we speak of ideology? In 1989, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history and thereby also the end of ideology as a relevant analytical category. The big struggle between capitalism and communism had allegedly ended with the victory of the former. Subsequent political conflict was presumably post-ideological. This has been a pervasive idea that influenced academic and non-academic thinking about politics and international relations over the past decades. In the wake of this, the concept of ideology has played a marginalized role in the mainstream of these fields, and a role that arguably conflicts with its initial purpose.

For example, the term ideology does figure in research on political behaviour or party politics. Yet, their definition of the concept covers only the least common denominator and does depart substantially from the more fundamental understanding of ideology found in various (neo-)Marxist approaches. In mainstream Political Science, the concept was translated into positivist empirical research by referring only to explicitly held beliefs about the world. Generally, the aim is to situate actor's beliefs in an ideological space (for example a left-right scale) and use this positioning as a potential explanation for their behaviour.

This stands in opposition to an earlier understanding of ideology that goes back to Marx and others. There is a wide range of critical, post-structuralist, neo-Marxist, and other scholars who have developed the notion in many different directions (for example, Slavoj Žižek, Michel Foucault, Theodor Adorno, etc). What they have in common is that ideology is not a variable amongst others, but a pervasive category that

precedes many other variables. It is a precondition for actors to navigate and act in the social and political world, both on the structural and individual level.

To give an example, before an actor acts purposively in the world, he needs to interpret the world, its different parts, and his position within. Ideology serves this need and, understood in this way, it neither needs to be explicit, conscious, nor all the way coherent. Nor can ideology be seen as a variable that acts on the same level as, for example, economic or material factors. The interpretation of economic or material factors is already influenced by ideology. In that sense, the study of ideology would ask why actors think in terms of economic or material factors, and how do they interpret them.

Duration

10 hours

Requirements

This workshop is worth **10 credits**. In order to be credited for this workshop, participants are required to read all the materials, participate in the discussions and act as a discussant for one of the sessions. Everybody is welcome to attend without taking credit points.

Readings

For the first session – Ideology: A Conceptual and Theoretical Toolkit

- Nina Tannenwald, 'Ideas and Explanation: Advancing the Theoretical Agenda,' *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7/2 (2005): 13-42.
- Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'A Map of the Field of Ideological Analysis', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 18/3 (2013): 299-327.
- John Jost, Christopher Federico and Jaime Napier, 'Political Ideology: Its Structure, Functions and Elective Affinities,' *Annual Review of Psychology* 60 (2006): 307-337.
- Michael Freeden, 'Confronting the chimera of a 'post-ideological' age', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 8/2 (2005): 247-262.

For the second session – Is Ideology a Useful Analytical Concept?

- Siniša Malešević, 'Ideology' In: K. Dowding (ed). *Encyclopedia of Power*. London: Sage (2011)

For the third session – Nationalism: Thick or Thin Ideology?

- Siniša Malešević, 'Identity as Ideology'. London: Palgrave. (2006) (Chapter 4, 'The Dominant Ideology of Modernity' pp. 83-108).

For the fourth session – The Role of Ideology in Mass Political Violence

- Scott Straus, *Making and Unmaking Nations: War, Leadership and Genocide in Modern Africa* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015): Introduction and Chs. 1-3.
- Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'Rethinking the Role of Ideology in Mass Atrocities,' *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26/5 (2014): 821-841 *OR* Jonathan Leader Maynard, 'Preventing Mass Atrocities: Ideological Strategies and Interventions,' *Politics and Governance* 3/3 (2015)
- Francisco Gutiérrez Sanín & Elisabeth Jean Wood, 'Ideology in civil war: Instrumental adoption and beyond.' *Journal of Peace Research*, 51 (2015): 213-226.

Schedule

The workshop takes place on **Monday 23 and Tuesday 24 May.**

Monday 23 May

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| 10.00 – 10.30 | Introductory remarks and coffee |
| 10.30 – 12.30 | Ideology: A Conceptual and Theoretical Toolkit
Jonathan Maynard, University of Oxford |
| 12.30 – 14.00 | <i>Lunch break</i> |
| 14.00 – 16.00 | Is Ideology a Useful Analytical Concept?
Siniša Malešević, University College Dublin |
| 16.15 | Drinks reception |

Tuesday 24 May

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| 10:30 – 12:30 | Nationalism: Thick or Thin Ideology?
Siniša Malešević, University College Dublin |
| 12:30 – 14:00 | <i>Lunch break</i> |
| 14:00 – 16:00 | The Role of Ideology in Mass Political Violence
Jonathan Maynard, University of Oxford |
| 16:00 – 16:30 | <i>Coffee break</i> |
| 16:30 – 18:30 | Ideology in International Relations
Jennifer Welsh, European University Institute |