

Interdisciplinary seminar on nationalism

23 January 2025

Arken, Helikon

Online participation via Zoom: <https://aboakademi.zoom.us/j/66312703059> (Meeting ID: 663 1270 3059).

Many of us at Åbo Akademi are working on topics that has some connection to nationalism, even if nationalism would not be the main topic of the research. This interdisciplinary seminar, organised by Johanna Ilmakunnas (Nordic History) and Urpo Nikanne (Finnish Language) seeks to open a wider picture of nationalism in language, society, and culture and the research on it from all kinds of point of view. The seminar programme demonstrates how a number of issues in our research are linked to nationalism, today or in past, as well as within methodologies or theoretical perspectives.

Program

12.15 Welcome – Johanna Ilmakunnas (Nordic History) & Urpo Nikanne (Finnish Language)

12.30 Hanna Lindberg (Nordic History)

Minority Nationalism and the Finland-Swedish Population Crisis of the 1950s

13.00 Debopam Das (English Language and Literature)

National identity and language: The case of India

13.30 Coffee Break

14.00 Short presentations

Tiina Tuominiemi (French Language and Literature)

French national pride in the 17th century – How Charles Perrault praises the modern France in his poem *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687)

Albina Kunikeeva (Russian Language and Literature)

The concept of nation and its derivatives in dictionary definitions and modern interpretations

Matti P. Pulkkinen (Church History)

The birth and the spread of the Historical School of Law in Germany, Sweden and Finland

Meri Larjavaara (French Language and Literature)

From skulls to French *lumières*: Nationalist transitions for children

Otso Kortekangas (Nordic History)

Nationalism and the environment: Nordic, Arctic and Sa mi perspectives 2

Urpo Nikanne (Finnish Language)

The concepts of 'nation' and 'patriotic' in Finnish government programs from 1917–1937

15.15 Break

15.30 Mia Åkerfelt (Art History)

To build a Nation: On nationalism in architectural history

16.00 Johannes Brusila (Musicology)

Music and nationalism from the perspective of cultural studies

16.30 Closing remarks, Johanna Ilmakunnas & Urpo Nikanne

16.45 End of the seminar program

Abstracts

Johannes Brusila, *Music and nationalism from the perspective of cultural studies*

The paper will discuss how nationalism has been discussed from a cultural studies perspective, focusing on how music has been connected to nationalism in for example essentialist, constructivist, and aesthetic discourses.

Debopam Das, *National identity and language: The case of India*

This talk will briefly outline the ways languages shaped and represented key aspects of Indian nationalism, which primarily emerged as a response to colonialism. It will also highlight the contemporary Hindi vs. non-Hindi debates in modern India.

Otso Kortekangas, *Nationalism and the environment: Nordic, Arctic and Sámi perspectives*

I pitch my research in environmental history from three angles: 1 how nationalism has affected the relationship between the Nordic countries and the Sa mi, 2 how nationalism has been used by Sa mi actors for political leverage, 3 how the national-economic self-image of Finland and Sweden as “forest countries” plays out in biology education.

Albina Kunikeeva, *The concept of nation and its derivatives in dictionary definitions and modern interpretations*

The word ‘nation’ (нация) and its derivatives are included in the terminological systems of various fields of humanitarian knowledge: history, political sciences, philosophy, sociology, etc., and also they function as common vocabulary and are widely used in different types of discourse. At the same time, in Russian-language scientific discourse, the conceptual content, for example, of the terms ‘nation’ (adj. ‘national’/‘национальный’) and ‘nationality’/‘национальность’, etc. are the subject of controversy that has been going on for decades (torn in their interpretation between ‘political/ state-civil community’ and ‘ethnic community’).

Scientists note that in the Russian-language cognitive sphere there are no clear definitions of the concepts of nation/нация (national/национальный), nationality/национальность, nationalism/национализм (nationalistic/националистический) – associated with the non-strict delineation of the semantics of a number of lexemes with a borrowed root in the Russian language –, which allows them to be used as a means of manipulation in modern political and media discourse.

An attempt is made to analyze the description of these concepts in the dictionary materials of the Russian language (starting from the 18th century) and in modern collocations.

Meri Larjavaara, *From skulls to French lumières: Nationalist transitions for children*

While working on the different ways France communicates to citizens about its draft laws we – Soili Hakulinen (Tampere university) and I – were reading a text written for children and to be used by teachers in classrooms. The draft law was about France going to return skulls and other human remains from museums to the countries where they had been taken from. What we got especially interested in was the different nationalist transitions made in the text to speak about the glorious past France has as a country.

Hanna Lindberg, *Minority Nationalism and the Finland-Swedish Population Crisis of the 1950s*

This presentation focuses on minority nationalism – i.e., the nationalist practices, experiences, and strategies of minority groups – in connection with the Finland-Swedish ‘population crisis’ in the postwar era. Declining birth rates, emigration, and intermarriages created fears of the demise of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland and fuelled minority-nationalist sentiments. In the presentation, I will specifically focus on the issue of intermarriages between Swedish and Finnish speakers and how these were constructed as a threat to minority-nationalist cohesion.

Urpo Nikanne, *‘Nation’ in Finnish politics in 1917-1920*

The national romantic idea of a nation may have its place in art if it gives people a feeling of belonging to the continuum of generations and a group of people that has a history and roots. However, an idea of nation as a homogenous unit may be dangerous when it is applied in politics. Such an idea excludes those people who do not fit the idea of the “national values,” “way of life,” or other cultural (or physical) features that are associated to the assumed character of the nation. I will discuss such ideas in Finland in the early 1900’s and today.

Matti P. Pulkkinen, *The birth and the spread of the Historical School of Law in Germany, Sweden and Finland*

The German jurist Friedrich Carl von Savigny founded the conservative, nationalistic Historical School of Law in 1814. The Historical School believed that the laws were crystallizations of the Volksgeist and hence irreplaceable sources of justice. The ideas were adapted also in Sweden and Finland. In Finland the first proponents were A.I. Arwidsson and Wilhelm Gabriel Lagus. The liberal doctrine of law would have been impossible to adapt in the autonomic part of very conservative Russia but was usable as a defense of the Finnish legal autonomy.

This evolution cannot be explained solely by the Zeitgeist or romanticism. The contemporary political reality favored conservative nationalism. My theoretical point is to show the value of empirical study of history trying to go close to the res gestae and avoiding deductions from the highly abstract and vaguely defined concepts.

Tiina Tuominiemi, *French national pride in the 17th century – How Charles Perrault praises the modern France in his poem Le siècle de Louis le Grand (1687)*

A fervent partisan of modernity, Charles Perrault (1628–1703), clashes by his polemic poem *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* (1687) with the cultural authorities of his time by claiming that the modern French culture, under the benign rule of the king Louis XIV, equals and exceeds the culture of Antiquity.

Mia Åkerfelt, *To build a Nation: On nationalism in architectural history*

Throughout history, architectural design has been intrinsically connected to representations of ideologies, aimed at conveying meanings of power and class but also national values. This presentation showcases how researchers today deal with different aspects of nationalism in relation to architecture. How can we understand and deal with nationalism in our work, and how has nationalism shaped the research field of art and architectural history?