



DR. JOSHUA SHANES

MODERN JEWISH POLITICS

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Nations today seem to be a self-evident reality. Yet nations are in fact modern constructions, perhaps two centuries old (often much younger), that compete with other forms of community and identities for legitimacy and loyalty. Even the basic question, “What is a nation?” brings no uniform answer. Nation-states and nationalism can bond communities and stabilize states and regions, but they are also sources of violent conflict and have facilitated some of the most barbaric acts in human history. This course will explore the origin and development of nations and nationalism and consider what it means for us today, as Americans at the start of the 21st century. We will raise basic questions about identity, community (membership and boundaries), ethnicity, and the human condition.