

# NUFFIELD COLLEGE

## POLITICAL SCIENCE SEMINARS

**Michaelmas Term 2016**  
**Tuesdays 5pm – Clay Room, Nuffield College**

**Week 1: 11<sup>th</sup> October**

*Presenter:* **Eric Kaufmann**, Professor of Politics, Birkbeck College,  
University of London

<http://www.bbk.ac.uk/politics/our-staff/academic/eric-kaufmann>

*Title:* 'Can narratives of national identity reduce support for Hard Brexit and Trump?: a survey experiment'

**Abstract:** Centrist parties in the West are wrestling with the challenge posed by anti-immigration sentiment in an era of large-scale migration. Experimental research suggests that strongly-held attitudes, such as those pertaining to immigration, are difficult to change. Such sentiments are rooted in the desire to maintain ethno-territorial boundaries. Yet ethnic groups, like rivers, are both ever-changing and continuous over time, and whether one perceives one or the other may be a matter of priming and perception. Beginning with evidence that anti-immigration sentiment in the West stems primarily from cultural-demographic rather than economic anxiety, this paper asks whether narratives which reassure ethnic majorities about group continuity can shift anti-immigration sentiment. I present results from two similar YouGov survey experiments, one conducted in Britain, the other in America, focusing on native-born whites. These show that while an assimilation prime has a significant effect in softening immigration attitudes and support for 'hard Brexit' among socially conservative white voters in the UK, it has a limited impact on immigration sentiment and Trump support in America. On the other hand, priming immigration increases its salience among anti-immigration white voters in America but not in Britain. The talk concludes by discussing what these results mean for party messaging and public policy.