

The Politics of Terrorism (Online)

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Course Description

In this course, we will examine the form of political violence called terrorism. There are three main objectives for this course:

1. Familiarize students with the history of terrorism, including important recent events such as the September 11 attacks and the rise of ISIS.
2. Introduce students to the main themes and controversies in the academic terrorism literature.
3. Supply students with the conceptual and theoretical toolkit necessary to understand and analyze terrorism.

The syllabus for this course is structured in three parts. First, we will examine terrorism from a conceptual and historical perspective from 19th century anarchism to Al-Qaeda and ISIS (weeks 1 through 4). This section will lay the foundation for the subsequent weeks: it is necessary to understand what we mean by terrorism, and to appreciate the ways terrorism has changed (and has remained the same) during its history. Second, we will cover the motivations for terrorism (weeks 5 through 8). Why do individuals and groups use terrorism rather than legitimate means to pursue their objectives? We will explore various factors, including ideological and psychological ones, to make sense of this decision. Third, the part of the course explores contemporary issues in terrorism (weeks 9 through 16). This section of the course covers lone-wolf terrorism, but largely addresses terrorism from a group-level perspective, covering topics such as the strategies terrorist groups use, international terrorism, and state-sponsored paramilitaries and death squads.

Please note that this is an advanced undergraduate course. It does not require any previous knowledge of terrorism and does not have lectures. However, the reading load is fairly demanding. Students are expected to use evidence and ideas from the readings in each of the assignments listed below.

Course Requirements

1. Online Discussion (25% of grade)

Every Monday I will post a prompt on the ICON message board for students to answer. Students are expected to address the prompt in a short response (several paragraphs) by *Thursday* at midnight. Students also must respond to at least *two* of their classmates by *Sunday* at midnight. The goal here is to promote discussion among the class. Responses to your peers should be substantive and meaningful (e.g. more than simply writing "I agree" in more words). Disagreement and debate are certainly encouraged, but responses should also be formal and respectful. Drawing on the class material is expected but weaving in outside material is helpful as well. Students will be graded based on the quality of their answer to the initial prompt as well as the quality of their discussion with their peers.

I will regularly respond to students to help guide the discussion, pose additional questions to reflect upon, and to highlight what I consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the posts. However, your priority should be to engage in discussion with your peers; any responses to me following your initial prompt answer are counted as a bonus. Also, feel free to communicate your thoughts about the readings, such as whether you really enjoyed or hated particular texts, in a postscript to your initial response. I will count these as bonus as well. By bonus, I mean that I will record your additional responses and use this information favorably should your final grade in the class teeter on the boundary between two grades (so if you have an 89.5 I will be likelier to submit your final grade as an A- rather than a B+).

2. Quizzes (10% of grade)

Rather than a midterm exam, students are assigned two quizzes: one at the beginning of the semester (week 4) and one at the end of the semester (week 15). These quizzes are largely based on the two books listed below. Since the quizzes are scheduled in advance, students are expected to read each carefully before the quiz date (Sunday of the week in question). Quizzes will contain ten multiple choice questions about simple factual information from the books; students will have ten minutes (timed online) to complete each quiz. *PDFs of the books are provided on ICON so students do not have to purchase them.* However, if you wish to read a physical copy, all are available for purchase at reasonable prices online at venues such as www.amazon.com or www.abebooks.com. This goes for the books listed in the following section as well.

The two books that you will be quizzed on are:

1. Week 4: Daniel Byman. 2015. *Al-Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. Week 15: *The 9/11 Commission Report*. 2004. Chapters 1–2, 4–5, 7, and 9–10.

3. Book Analysis (10% of grade)

Quite a few novelists have explored terrorism in their works. Students will select one of the fiction books listed below and answer the following question in the form of a short essay (5 pages): what, if anything, can we learn about terrorism from this novel? Students are expected to 1) make a clear argument and 2) support it with information from the book (e.g. direct quotations). You

can also address related questions (such as what, if anything, we can learn about terrorism from literature in general) so long as you support your argument with the novel you read. Feel free to take any position in your analysis; although I selected these novels because they are mostly written by acclaimed authors, critical analysis is certainly welcome. You can submit your review anytime during the semester before May 8th at midnight, although I recommend waiting until at least a few weeks into the semester so you have some more background information. PDFs of most of the books are posted on ICON so students do not have to purchase them. Please skim an online description before selecting one since some have graphic and potentially disturbing content. I have read them so feel free to ask me any questions before picking one.

The books to choose from are:

- Fyodor Dostoevsky. 1872. *Demons*.
- Joseph Conrad. 1907. *The Secret Agent*.
- Joseph Conrad. 1911. *Under Western Eyes*.
- Yukio Mishima. 1969. *Runaway Horses*.
- B.S. Johnson. 1973. *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry*.
- William O'Rourke. 1996. *Notts*.
- Michel Houellebecq. 2001. *Platform*.
- Sergei Stepniak. 1889. *The Career of a Nihilist*.
- G.K. Chesterson. 1908. *The Man Who Was Thursday*.
- Jack London. 1963. *The Assassination Bureau*.
- Eric Ambler. 1972. *The Levanter*.
- Don DeLillo. 1991. *Mao II*.
- Philip Roth. 1997. *American Pastoral*.
- John Updike. 2006. *Terrorist*.

4. Final Exam (25% of grade)

Students will complete a take-home final exam, which they can complete any time during an allotted two day window. Students will have three hours to complete the exam, although it is written so that it can be completed in less time. The exam will contain a combination of short answer and essay questions, and students will choose among several possible questions to answer in each section. The goal of the final is to test basic understanding of the course material and the ability to think critically about the themes covered in the class. How difficult the exam is will be partly based on class performance in the online discussions. I am inclined to make an easier test if the discussions go exceptionally well, since then the exam becomes partially redundant.

5. Write a Research Paper (30% of grade)

Students will write a research paper on an analytical question about terrorism that suits their interests. A good research paper does not merely summarize previous research or restate the course material. Rather, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to think critically, conduct additional research, and carry out their own analysis. I will provide additional resources on writing a good research paper throughout the semester, and students are advised to think about topics that might interest them as early as possible. Please email me if you are unsure about a potential topic and I will be happy to provide some guidance.

Research papers are due by May 8th at midnight. I will impose a twenty point penalty for each day after the deadline (e.g. a paper submitted at 12:11 on May 9th will start at an 80 per-

cent). Although this penalty is severe, in real-world contexts deadlines are important and failure to meet them often comes with steep consequences.

Course Schedule and Readings

All readings listed on this syllabus are available on ICON. Please note that for some books you are only required to read selected chapters, although I have uploaded the entire book (as you might find some useful for your final papers.)

I have indicated the type of reading at the beginning of each one. "Articles" are academic articles that address theoretical, conceptual, and/or empirical aspects of terrorism. "Book chapters" are also academic works but are generally easier to read and less technical than articles. "Commentaries" are short news or perspective pieces as you would find in most periodicals. "Data" are links to datasets used in the study of terrorism; you should explore these data, observe their structure (e.g. are they about groups or attacks), and skim their coding descriptions. Depending on what you choose to write about, they may prove helpful in writing your final papers. "Terrorists in their own words" are documents authored by terrorists themselves. Please be advised that these readings sometimes deal with sensitive and unsettling issues; the point is not to adopt the terrorists' perspectives but to gain insight into the causes of terrorism from the terrorists themselves. The final exam may include questions about any of the materials listed in this course schedule.

Week 1: What Is Terrorism?

- Article: Charles Tilly. 2004. "Terror, Terrorism, Terrorists." *Sociological Theory* 22(1): 5-13.
- Article: Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Sivan Hirsch-Hoefler. 2004. "The Challenges of Conceptualizing Terrorism." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 16(4): 777-794.
- Article: Anthony Richards. 2014. "Conceptualizing Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37(3): 213-236.

Week 2: History I, Pre-WWI Terrorism

- Book Chapters: Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin. 2007. *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 6 and 7.
- Article: David Rapoport. 2002. "The Four Waves of Rebel Terror and September 11." *Anthropoetics* 8(1).
- Article: Christopher Fettweis. 2009. "Freedom Fighters and Zealots: Al Qaeda in Historical Perspective." *Political Science Quarterly* 124(2): 269-296.
- Article: Mark Shirk. 2019. "The Universal Eye: Anarchist 'Propaganda of the Deed' and Development of the Modern Surveillance State." *International Studies Quarterly* 63(2): 334-345.
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Sergei Nechaev. 1869. *Catechism of a Revolutionary*.

Week 3: History II, Terrorism from WWII to the Vietnam Era

- Book Chapter: Gerard Chaliand and Arnaud Blin. 2007. *The History of Terrorism: From Antiquity to Al Qaeda*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapter 11.
- Book Chapter: Walter Laqueur. 2002. *A History of Terrorism*. New Brunswick: Transaction. Chapter 5.
- Article: Martha Crenshaw. 1981. "The Causes of Terrorism." *Comparative Politics* 13(4): 379-399.
- Article: Brian Crim. 2007. "Terror from the Right: Revolutionary Terrorism and the Failure of the Weimar Republic." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 27(2): 51-63.
- Data: Josh T. 2019. "Terrorist Groups, 1860–1969."

Week 4: History III, Al-Qaeda and ISIS

- Book: Daniel Byman. 2015. *Al-Qaeda, The Islamic State, and the Global Jihadist Movement: What Everyone Needs to Know*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- QUIZ I

Week 5: Motivations for Terrorism I, Who Becomes a Terrorist?

- Article: Max Abrahms. 2008. "What Terrorists Really Want: Terrorist Motives and Counterterrorism Strategy." *International Security* 32(4): 78-105.
- Article: Alexander Lee. 2011. "Who Becomes a Terrorist? Poverty, Education, and the Origins of Political Violence." *World Politics* 63(2): 203-245.
- Article: Simon Cottee and Keith Hayward. 2011. "Terrorist (E)motives: The Existential Attractions of Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 34(12): 963-986.
- Article: Lorenzo Vidino. 2007. "The Hofstad Group: The New Face of Terrorist Networks in Europe." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30(7): 579-592.

Week 6: Motivations for Terrorism II, The Psychology of Terrorism

- Book Chapter: Christopher Lasch. 1979. *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations*. New York: Norton. Chapter 1.
- Article: Jeff Victoroff. 2005. "The Mind of a Terrorist: A Review and Critique of the Psychological Approach." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49(1): 3-42.
- Article: Martha Crenshaw. 2000. "The Psychology of Terrorism: An Agenda for the 21st Century." *Political Psychology* 20(2): 405-420.
- Article: Adam Lankford. 2017. "A Psychological Re-examination of the Mental Health Problems among the 9/11 Terrorists." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* (Online): 1-24.

Week 7: Ideology and Religion I, Ideologies

- Article: Ehud Sprinzak. 1995. "Right-Wing Terrorism in a Comparative Perspective: The Case of Split Delegation." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7(1): 17-43.
- Article: Ignacio Sanchez-Cuenca. 2007. "The Dynamics of Nationalist Terrorism: ETA and the IRA." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 19(3): 289-306.
- Book Chapter: Jerrold Post. 1990. "Terrorist Psycho-Logic: Terrorist Behavior as a Product of Psychological Forces." In *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies Theologies, States of Mind*, ed. Walter Reich. Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press.
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Ted Kaczynski. 1995. *Industrial Society and Its Future* (The Unabomber Manifest).
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Bernardine Dorn. 1970. "Declaration of a State of War."

Week 8: Ideology and Religion II, Religion

- Book Chapters: Marc Juergensmeyer. 2000. *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Chapters 7 and 8.
- Article: David Rapoport. 1988. "Messianic Sanctions for Terror." *Comparative Politics* 20(2): 195-213.
- Article: James Piazza. 2009. "Is Islamic Terrorism More Dangerous? An Empirical Study of Group Ideology, Organization, and Goal Structure." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 21(1): 62-88.
- Short Article: Stathis Kalyvas. 2015. "Is ISIS a Revolutionary Group and if Yes, What are the Implications?" *Perspectives on Terrorism* 9(4): 42-47.
- Commentary: Charles Krauthammer. 2001. "The Enemy is Not Islam. It is Nihilism." *The Weekly Standard*. October, 22.
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Osama bin Laden. 1996. "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places."

Week 9: Lone Wolf Terrorism

- Book Chapters: Mark Sageman. 2008. *Leaderless Jihad: Terror Networks in the Twenty-First Century*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 8.
- Article: Jeffrey Kaplan. 1997. "Leaderless Resistance." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 9(3): 80-95.
- Article: Brian Phillips. 2017. "Deadlier in the US? On Lone Wolves, Terrorist Groups, and Attack Lethality." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 29(3): 533-549.
- Short Article: Jacob Ravndal. 2012. "A Post-Trial Profile of Anders Behring Breivik." *CTC Sentinel* 5(10).
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Joe Stack. "Untitled Manifesto." *CTC Sentinel* 5(10).

Week 10: Terrorist Groups

- Article: Victor Asal, Brian Nussbaum, and D. William Harrington. 2007. "Terrorism as Transnational Advocacy: An Organizational and Tactical Examination." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 30(1): 15-39.
- Book Chapter: Leonard Weinberg, Ami Pedahzur, and Arie Perliger. 2009. *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1.
- Article: Eteri Tsintsadze-Maass and Richard Maass. 2014. "Groupthink and Terrorist Radicalization." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26(5): 735-758.
- Short Article: Valdis Krebs. 2002. "Uncloaking Terrorist Networks." *First Monday* 7(4).
- Figure: Joshua Kilberg. 2012. "A Basic Model Explaining Terrorist Group Organizational Structure." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 35(11): 810-830. (Note: You only need to look at Figure 1 on Page 813).
- Data: Seth Jones and Martin Libicki. 2008. *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qaeda*. Santa Monica: Rand. Pages 142–186 (List of Terrorist Groups).

Week 11: Strategies of Terrorism

- Article: Andrew Kydd and Barbara Walter. 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security* 31(1): 49-80.
- Book Chapter: Diego Gambetta. 2005. *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 7.
- Article: Thomas Schelling. 1982. "Thinking About Nuclear Terrorism." *International Security* 6(4): 61-77.
- Commentary: Nicholas Grossman. 2018. "Are Drones the New Terrorist Weapon? Someone Tried to Kill Venezuela's President with One." *Washington Post*, August 10.
- Terrorists in their Own Words: Carlos Marighella. 1970. *Minimanual of the Urban Guerilla*.
- Data: START Global Terrorism Database.

Week 12: Counterterrorism

- Book: Lawrence Wright. 2006. *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*. New York: Knopf.

Week 13: Paramilitaries and Death Squads

- Article: Sabine Carey and Neil Mitchell. 2017. "Progovernment Militias." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20: 127-147.
- Article: Ariel Ahram. 2014. "The Role of State-Sponsored Militias in Genocide." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26(3): 488-503.

- Article: Govinda Clayton and Andrew Thomson. 2014. "The Enemy of My Enemy is My Friend . . . The Dynamics of Self-Defense Forces in Irregular War: The Case of the Sons of Iraq." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37(11): 920-935.
- Book Chapter: Robert Carmack. 1986. *Harvest of Violence: The Maya Indians and the Guatemala Crisis*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Chapter 2.
- Article: Johannes Harnischfeger. 2003. "The Bakassi Boys: Fighting Crime in Nigeria." *Journal of Modern African Studies* 41(1): 23-49.
- Data: Neil Mitchell and Sabine Carey. 2013. Progovernment Militia Database.

Week 14: International Terrorism

- Article: Thomas Hegghammer. 2013. "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Explaining Variation in Western Jihadists' Choice between Domestic and Foreign Fighting." *American Political Science Review* 107(1): 1-15.
- Article: Barak Mendelsohn. 2012. "God vs. Westphalia: Radical Islamist Movements and the Battle for Organizing the World." *Review of International Studies* 38: 589-613.
- Article: Assaf Moghadam. 2009. "Motives for Martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the Spread of Suicide Attacks." *International Security* 33(3): 46-78.
- Article: Martha Crenshaw. 2017. "Transnational Jihadism in Civil Wars." *Daedalus* 146(4): 59-70.

Week 15: 9/11

- Book: *The 9/11 Commission Report*. 2004. Chapters 1–2, 4–5, 7, and 9–10.
- Commentary: Tom Junod. 2016. "The Falling Man: An Unforgettable Story." *Esquire*, September 9.
- *QUIZ II*

Week 16: The Future of Terrorism

- *No readings. Prepare to take final exam and hand in final papers.*