Introduction to Terrorism
POLSCI 232-01
Fall 2014

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Course Website: https://sakai.duke.edu/portal/site/54cf7420-4de4-4203-92fe-9dc5eab7ab6d/page/17a338b7-4cda-4ed6-a592-dd7c75123685

Course Overview

This course focuses on the nature of subnational terrorist organizations and government responses to them. It aims to provide the tools necessary to become educated consumers of news in a post-9/11 world, absent the typical polemics, through the careful analysis of different aspects of terrorism: its historical, social, cultural, economic, political, and religious context; the determinants of terrorism at the individual and state level; the organizational structure of terrorist groups; the available weapons and tactics of subnational terrorist organizations; mobilization and recruitment within terror networks; terrorist finance; and methods of counterterrorism. We will also briefly discuss different methods employed in the academic study of terrorism.

The course will be split into two parts. In the first, we will assess theories of terrorism and their empirical support, delving into numerous aspects of the tactic. We’ll start by discussing its definition and some of the ways in which it is studied before breaking down terrorism into its component pieces, each of which will occupy its own unit. We’ll discuss terrorism at the individual, group, and state levels, including motivations as diverse as psychology, political institutions, economics, and religion. Though I will open most classes with a lecture—some brief, some longer—I expect that we will very quickly transition to discussion. The study of terrorism is still very much a new endeavor and there is much that is not known, implying lots of room for us to search for answers. We will also on two occasions engage in simulations designed to help you get a feel for the real decisions being made by both terrorist groups and their prospective targets. Finally, there will be a pair of midterms designed to test understanding of the theories we will have discussed.

Having developed theories to understand terrorism, we will do two things in the second part: discuss the methods by which terrorist groups are fought and apply both theories and counterterror methods to an array of terror organizations throughout history. In the latter case you will take on the role of intelligence analysts, as each of you will be given a terrorist organization to report upon to the rest of the class via both paper and presentation, and you will subsequently help to lead discussion on that group. The goal of this part is not only to provide you with a solid background in historical terrorism to place contemporary terrorism into context, but also to illustrate practical application to specific groups of the theories we discussed earlier. This part of the course will culminate in a paper in which you will act in the role of an intelligence analyst, dissecting a subnational terrorist organization in order both to assess the organization for the target state’s head of intelligence, and to provide counterterror strategies for minimizing its impact.

Course Requirements

1. Participation (20%): Decisions made regarding terrorism tend to have wide-reaching effects, and it is important to be able to express oneself clearly and objectively when discussing it. Accordingly, regular participation is vital and will be graded accordingly. To improve civility when discussing this sensitive subject, all comments will be kept as scholarly in nature as possible. Further, before coming to class, I expect that you will have read the required readings for that week and be ready with questions to discuss. During the presentation weeks, I expect that you will have read the papers distributed by your
classmates and familiarized yourself with the group being discussed on your own before coming to class as well. Finally, I reserve the right to call on people should discussion become dominated by a handful of voices.

2. **Midterm exams (30%, 15% each):** There will be two in-class midterm exams during the first part of the course. They will be a mix of multiple choice, short answer, and essay.

3. **Historical Event Paper/Presentation (25%):** At about the one-third point in the semester all students will be assigned (via a combination of choice and lottery) to a group to report on a subnational terrorist organization. Each member of the group will be responsible for writing up a 5-10 page report, double spaced, on the assigned topic. These reports must be distributed to the entire class by noon at least two days before the class session during which we will discuss the organization in question. The reports should be your own work, not a group consensus. On the day of discussion each group will give a thirty-minute presentation. While the groups do not need to meet (though they of course can), they will arrange among themselves to divvy up presentation duties so that each member conveys a roughly equal amount of information. After the presentation the group will field questions and lead discussion. Grades will be given equally to the paper and the presentation, and a template for what is required for each one will be provided on the course website. Because you will be scheduled well in advance to present on a specific day, there will be no extensions for this assignment.

4. **Policy Memo (25%):** You will choose a subnational terrorist organization and write a policy memo phrased for the head of intelligence of the targeted state. This memo will provide a brief summary of the situation and your proposal for policy in the region going forward. *This memo must make use of the analyses discussed during the course.* It must be between 10 and 15 pages (double-spaced), not including a title, references, or other supporting pages. This policy memo should follow guidelines that will be posted on the course website, and will be graded in terms of how well it satisfies the assignment as well as the quality of the writing (i.e. it should be written formally, with proper spelling and grammar). Memos will be due by noon the Wednesday after the last week of class (Dec 10), but may be turned in earlier. There will be no extensions on the final policy memo.

5. **Extra Credit Option (2%):** You can receive a 2% increase in your final grade if you enroll in the Political Science Research Pool (PSRP) program and complete 2 credit hours. Please find all details on how to take advantage of this opportunity at: [https://web.duke.edu/psrp/](https://web.duke.edu/psrp/).

**Readings**

There are no required books for the class. Readings can be found either on the course website or via Duke Library’s website. There are also several recommended books that will be on reserve. While not required, we will in some cases read selections from them, and should you go on in your studies of terrorism they may prove useful. You may find one of them particularly useful for this class, though: Crenshaw, Martha. (1994). *Terrorism in Context.* Penn State University Press. This book provides excellent background and insight into several cases of historical terrorism, and many of you may want to make use of it when preparing your historical event paper and presentation. Doing so is not required, however.

Other recommended books:

Class Schedule

W Aug 27: Definition
Bruce Hoffman, “Defining Terrorism” (course website), pp. 13-44.
Ross, Jeffrey, “Introducing Oppositional Terrorism” (course website). pp. 1-27.

F Aug 29: NO CLASS

W Sep 3: Studying Terrorism I

F Sep 5: Studying Terrorism II

W Sep 10: Causes and Motivations I
Jeffrey Ian Ross, “Chapter Three: Exploring the Causes” (course website) pp. 77-91.

F Sep 12: Causes and Motivations II

W Sep 17: Psychology and Religion
F Sep 19: Organizational Challenges Overview


Harmony Documents: “Al-Qa'ida Goals and Structure” and “Employment Contract” (course website).

Twomey, “Staff Report” (course website).

W Sep 24: Weapons and Tactics I: Strategic Overview


F Sep 26: Weapons and Tactics II: Psychological Warfare and the Media


W Oct 1: Midterm I

F Oct 3: Simulation I: Hijacking and Hostage Taking


W Oct 8: Weapons and Tactics III: The Suicide Bomber


F Oct 10: Weapons and Tactics IV: WMDs


John Parachini, “Putting WMD Terrorism into Perspective” (course website).

W Oct 15:  Democracy, Autocracy, and Terrorism

F Oct 17:  Public Support and Public Reaction


F Oct 24:  Mobilization and Recruitment II: Jihadi Networks

W Oct 29:  Terrorist Financing and State Sponsorship

F Oct 31:  Midterm Exam II
W Nov 5:  Counter-Terror I: Strategic Behavior


F Nov 7:  Counter-Terror II: Exploiting Organizational Vulnerabilities


W Nov 12:  Counter-Terror III: Breaking Networks


F Nov 14:  Simulation II: Terror vs. Counterterror


W Nov 19:  Historical Group Presentations I (Red Brigades, Shining Path)

Martha Crenshaw, “Introduction: Thoughts on Relating Terrorism to Historical Contexts” (course website) pp. 3-24.

F Nov 21:  Historical Group Presentations II (ETA, IRA)

W Nov 26:  NO CLASS (Happy Thanksgiving!)

F Nov 28:  NO CLASS (Happy Thanksgiving!)

W Dec 3:  Historical Group Presentations III (FLN, Hezbollah)

F Dec 5:  Historical Group Presentations IV (Hamas, Tamil Tigers)

W Dec 10:  Policy Memos Due by Noon