

CONF 240
Social Dynamics of Terrorism
Fall 2009

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Terrorism is a global problem, arising from both state and non-state actors and affecting many people in the world. Great variation in both the forms terrorism takes and also in the impact of terrorism on social systems justifies focusing, on the one hand, on the social dynamics that give rise to terrorism and, on the other hand, on the effects on social dynamics in societies struggling with the threat and reality of terrorism. Students will learn a method for analyzing conflict and use it to identify the sources and conditions that give rise to terrorism and the impacts that terrorist activities have on different societies. The course begins with a consideration of different definitions of terrorism and subsequent topics include a broad survey of modern terrorism, the range of actors involved in terrorism, and cross-state comparisons of reactions to terrorism. Each course topic explores case studies from two different regions of the world to help students understand the variations that terrorism takes depending on the social and political context. Students will develop case studies of terrorist organizations that will be used for cross-state comparisons of the dynamics of terrorism. Through course readings, films, and case study presentations students will become acquainted with a variety of theories for understanding terrorism and with many of the policies intended to address it.

CLASS POLICIES & PROCEDURES

- Students are responsible for completing individual and group assignments on time.
- Students will be penalized the equivalent of one letter increment for each day the assignment is late. In other words, a paper I would otherwise have graded “A” will become an A- on the first day late, a B+ on the second day, and so on. Anything over three days late will need to be discussed personally with me. Assignments that are overdue by more than one week will not be accepted.
- If something comes up that will prevent you from attending class, let me know ahead of time when possible and contact a group member to find out what was missed. Students are responsible for all announcements, assignments, and date changes made in class and for all material covered in class even if they are not there. I urge you to make every effort to attend no matter what the situation—your group members and your grade are depending on it.
- Delays, deferrals, or a grade of “incomplete” for the course will be given only in cases of personal or immediate family crisis. Due to the interestingly sharp increase in familial death rates often noticed around paper deadlines, take note that while I will be sympathetic to any such situation, I will also expect backup.
- In this modern age, the use of the Internet for discussion and dissemination has become commonplace. Some class announcements and readings may be posted to the class website or sent via email. Students are responsible for keeping up to date with announcements and assignments placed on the site or sent via email.
- Any cases of plagiarism (from published or unpublished work) or turning in work not written by the student him or herself, will be punishable as per the university honor codes. You should

all be familiar with the relevant honor codes, and I expect rigid adherence to them. If you have any questions about these codes, read ICAR's Academic Standards and the University's Honor Code; if you have further questions, come see me.

Requirements:

Participation: You are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings. This means that you should have completed all the assigned readings prior to each class. The topic of terrorism can be very divisive. The goal in this class is to have respectful, open dialogue of the topic as part of learning about the origins and dynamics of terrorism impacts our social world. Be mindful of the sensitivities of others in your comments in class; however, open discussion and dialogue are our goals.

Group exercises within class time will revolve around the design of terrorist groups, applying readings and discussions. Your group members will be depending on you to understand the reading well enough to participate actively.

While missed attendance will risk your grade, *attendance does not equal participation*—students will be expected to participate actively in class discussion. Attendance and class participation will be worth 20% of your final grade.

Book/movie Review: 3-4 pages. Each student will be required to read one fictional account of terrorism, or watch a movie on same. A suggested list will be provided, but students may choose an alternate book if it is approved by the instructor. Students will be expected to write an analysis of the conflict presented in the novel using the analytical framework presented in class. This review will account for 25% of the semester grade and be due September 24.

Mid-term paper: 5-6 pages. This paper will turn some of the class group work around. Students will take the role of counter-terrorism analysts making recommendations about a group or region of their choice, analyzing causal factors, nature of the group, recruiting tendencies and likely targets. Choices will be discussed in class two weeks prior to the due-date. The paper, due October 22, will be worth 20% of the final grade.

Final Exam: A take-home final exam will be given on May 11. Exam questions will be distributed via email, and students will have 24 hours to return the finished answers to the instructor. It will amount to 5-6 pages. The exam will be discussed the week before. The final exam will account for 35% of the semester grade.

Required Books:

Reich, Walter. Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies. Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1990

Richardson, Louise. What Terrorists Want. New York: Random House, 2006.

Additional reading:

Each student will be responsible for researching additional material relevant to the class sections.

Course Outline

Unit 1. Introduction and Framework for Analysis

September 3

- Organization of the course, assignments, expectations
- Multi-Disciplinary Analysis as a tool for understanding terrorism
- Frameworks for Analysis
- Outline of primary cases being used for class discussion
- Reading: no assigned reading

September 10

- Definitions of terrorism, and clarification of arguments and terminology
- “_____ -terrorisms”; Narco-terrorism, Cyber-terrorism and others
- Types of terrorist activity
- Labeling of terrorist groups or terrorism sponsors
 - Anarchist terrorism in late 19th/early 20th century Europe and America
 - Left Wing terrorism in the mid 20th century Western Europe and the United States
 - Post-colonial ethno-national terrorism in Africa and the middle east
 - Religious and millennial terrorism
- Reading: Reich, chapter 1; Richardson, chapter 1

Unit 2. Who Joins a Terrorist Organization and Why?

September 17

- Overview of profiles of terrorists
 - Socioeconomic factors
 - Political affiliations
 - Psychological profiles
- Who recruits, where are we looking for recruiters?
- How useful is profiling, and do we understand what we’re looking for?
- Dynamics of Recruiting individuals to terrorism organizations
- Reading: Richardson, chapter 2 and 3

September 24

- Report paper due
- Discussion of Fictional Accounts: comparison of perspectives and political positions reflected in the accounts
- Relationship between media portrayal and popular support for counter-terrorist measures
- Reading: none

Unit 3. What Social Conditions Give Rise to Terrorist Organizations?

October 1

- Social Conditions
 - Societal norms about violence
 - Relationship between terrorist organizations and the communities or societies they arise from—context, “passive and active support”
- Leftist terrorism in South America, history and context; Leftist terrorism in Italy
- Reading: Reich, chapter 4

October 8

- Structural Conditions
 - Role of discrimination or deprivation
 - Impact of political structure on the incidence of terrorism
 - The relationship of terrorist groups to political groups
- Palestinian and other Arab terrorism
- Reading: Richardson, chapter 4; Reich, chapter 2

Unit 4. What are the Dynamics of Terrorism?

October 15

- Goals of Terrorist Organizations
- Terrorist tactics and targets.
 - Relationship between the goals and ideology of the group and the tactics and targets they choose
- Reading: Reich, chapter 9; Richardson, chapter 5

October 22

- Due: mid-term paper
- Ethno-national terrorism
- Tamil Tigers, Sri Lankan terrorism
- IRA/PIRA and Protestant terrorism in Northern Ireland
- Reading: none

Unit 5. Reactions to Terrorism

October 29

- Media Coverage of Terrorism
 - Differences around the globe
 - Criteria for “Newsworthiness”
 - Coverage as a goal of terrorism
 - Changes in coverage over the last century
- Case Study: Hamas and Al Aqsa (Palestinian Territories/ Israel),
- Reading: Student researched and discussed

November 5

- Responses by States
 - Military
 - Law Enforcement

- Social and Economic Development
- Variation in responses of different political systems
 - Western democracies, authoritarian regimes, monarchies, etc.
- Reading: Reich, chapters 11 and 12

Unit 6. Challenges in Addressing Terrorism

November 12

- Effect of terrorism on target populations; the narrowing of arguments and questions
 - Psychological impacts
 - Economic impacts
 - Political impacts
- Case studies: Israel and Gaza, 2008-2009
- Reading: Richardson, chapter 6

November 19

- Counter-terrorism—what works?
- Reading: Richardson, chapter 8

November 26

- Civil rights, human rights and counterterrorism; the ACLU vs. the “Patriot Act”
 - Counterterrorism and democracy
 - Challenges to laws protecting rights
- Comparative Review of Solutions around the globe to balancing security and individual and collective rights
- Reading: student researched and discussed

December 3

- Domestic US terrorism and the strategies we’ve used thus far
 - How is this different from what we’ve done overseas, and why?
- Reading: Reich, chapter 14

December 10

- Review and wrap-up