Politics of Terror
David A. Siegel

Course information:
Course Number: INR 5137
Time: Friday 9:00 - 11:30 am
Place: Bellamy Building 113
Course website: Blackboard

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Office Hours: Friday 2:00 - 3:00 pm

Course Description

As its title implies, this course addresses terrorism as a political act. We will consider solely terror as an oppositional tactic in this class, leaving aside state terror entirely. This is not in any way a statement of the relative importance of the two; merely an accommodation to the often different dynamics of the two cases. The first couple of weeks will provide a broad overview of the state of research in oppositional terrorism and a common pool of historical terror examples on which to draw later in the class. Subsequent to this we will break down the topic, looking at issues of mobilization and terror networks, methods of terror and counter-terror and their consequences, and the organization of and competition between terror groups. Discussion of problems and opportunities for research in the literature will arise naturally, often multiple times, in response to analyses of each of these issues. The course will culminate in the production of a research proposal designed to the the stub of a future publishable paper (or even dissertation project).

Readings

All readings for the class are listed in the tentative schedule below in the order in which they will be used. Some readings, particularly single book chapters, will be available via Blackboard, and you should check here first for all readings. Articles not there are available via the internet and your responsibility to obtain. Books will be reserved at the library whenever possible, or may be ordered from your favorite bookseller. Required readings are to be done before class. In some cases, additional recommended readings are listed below each topic on the schedule as well. These are included as a preliminary (and non-exhaustive) guide for further reading on the topic.

Grading

- Participation: 20%. All students are required to have completed the required readings for each week before class begins, and everyone should be prepared to discuss the readings during class. Intelligent participation in departmental talks and at conferences will be highly valued throughout your professional career and you should practice this ability now. I expect you to provide evidence that you have done the readings in a thoughtful and careful manner. After each class meeting I will assign a participation grade that takes into account the frequency and quality of your contributions. The following scale will be used for scoring your participation:
  A to A-: The student made a very strong contribution to the class. Comments were thoughtful and constructive.
  B+ to B-: The student contributed meaningfully to the course. Comments went beyond simply repeating the assigned material, but did not demonstrate strong insights.
C+ or lower: The student did not contribute meaningfully. Comments were limited to repeating the assigned material rather than making connections or extensions, or were inaccurate.

F: The student did not speak in class.

- Discussion leadership: 20%. Each student will be assigned two seminars to lead between weeks 3 and 14; some weeks will have two leaders. Discussion leaders will be chosen in the first class meeting. Each week’s discussion leader(s) is(are) responsible for delivering to the class, via e-mail, a 2-3 page paper by 5 pm of the Wed the week of class. The paper should open with a brief summary of the major points of the reading, and then spend most of its time offering additional avenues for discussion that the leader feels would be productive and interesting to address during the seminar. The student(s) in charge that week will then lead discussion during the seminar. The depth of and preparation evidenced in these papers, particularly in the discussion questions, along with the leading of the seminar itself, will determine the student’s grade.

- Final paper: 50%. This is an elective class, so your attendance implies an interest in the subject area. As you go through the course, you should be thinking first about how you could turn this interest into a concrete research question, and second about how you can address this research question in a publishable paper. This thinking will culminate in a paper due the penultimate week of class. The intent of this paper is to provide the framework for future publishable work. While you need not perform significant data analysis nor solve formal models in the paper, it must do two other things: 1) Set your research question solidly in extant literature, which may entail a selective literature review as well; and 2) Detail your proposed theory, its derived hypotheses, your expectations about these hypotheses, and where you will look for your data. While you are of course welcome to finish the paper by completing the analysis (and I will provide comments on this as well should you do so), it is not required, and the grade will be based solely on the required parts.

- Final Presentation: 10%. In the last week of class, you will all present your paper ideas in the style that will become familiar to you via conferences: you will receive about 10-12 minutes to present your work to the class. Unlike conferences, we will stop after each presentation and take 10 minutes to provide feedback. Grades will be based on the quality of both your presentation and your answers to questions afterward.

Tentative Schedule of Readings (Subject to Change with Advance Notice):

Preliminaries

**Week 1: January 9 — Definitions, Progress, and Problems**

**Required Reading:**


RECOMMENDED READING:

**Week 2: January 16** — An Abbreviated and Partial Tour of History  
**REQUIRED READING:**
Crenshaw, Martha. 1994. Terrorism in Context. Penn State University Press. [Selections: chapters by Crenshaw (Introduction), della Porta (Red Brigades), Palmer (Shining Path), Shabad and Llera (ETA), Townshend (IRA), Crenshaw (Algeria)]
[Note: The International Crisis Group (http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm is an excellent source of background information on groups, and further puts out weekly updates on conflict situations.]

RECOMMENDED READING:
Biographies: O’Doherty, The Volunteer; Giorgio, Memoirs of an Italian Terrorist; Figner, Memoirs of a Revolutionist; Aukai Collins, My Jihad; Savinkov, Memoirs of a Terrorist; Taruc, He Who Rides the Tiger; McGuire, To Take Arms; Kabiro, Man in the Middle; Nasiri, My Jihad.
Week 3: January 23 — Economics, Democracy, and Repression I

REQUIRED READING:


RECOMMENDED READING:


Week 4: January 30 — Economics, Democracy, and Repression II

REQUIRED READING:


RECOMMENDED READING:

Week 5: February 6 — Mass Impact of Terrorism

REQUIRED READING:


RECOMMENDED READING:


Week 6: February 13 — Terror Networks

Required reading:


Recommended reading:


Week 7: February 20 — Religion

Required reading:


Recommended reading:
ATTACK AND DEFENSE: METHODS OF TERROR AND COUNTER-terror

**Week 8: February 27 — Terror Strategies**

**Required reading:**

**Recommended reading:**

**Week 9: March 6 — Suicide Terror**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**

Gambetta, Diego (Editor). 2006. *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*. Oxford University Press, USA.

**Week 10: March 20 — Counter-terror: Target Defense and Information**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Week 11: March 27 — Negotiations, Credible Commitment and Costly Signaling**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


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**Organization, Finance, and Competition**

**Week 12: Date TBA due to MPSA meeting (would have been April 3) — Finance and Counter-finance**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


Week 13: April 10 — Organizational Structure

Required reading:


Harmony Documents: “Al-Qa’ida Goals and Structure” and “Employment Contract.” Available at http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq_pdf.asp. [There are many other such documents as well for your perusal.]

Twomey, “Staff Report” (course website).

Recommended reading:


Week 14: April 17 — Competition and Factionalization

Papers Due by 9 am!

Required reading:


Recommended reading:

**Week 15: April 24 — Presentations**

**REQUIRED READING:**
None

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**Additional Information**

**Students with Disabilities**
Instructors will make reasonable accommodations for students with physical, mental or learning disabilities. Students with disabilities which may require some modification of seating, testing, or other class requirements are to inform the instructor (after class or during the instructor’s office hours) so that appropriate arrangements may be made. Students should register with the Student Disability Resource Center and bring a letter to the instructor from the SDRC indicating the required accommodations in the first week of class.

**Department/Collegiate Complaint Procedures**
A student who has a complaint against any member of the college’s teaching staff is responsible for following the procedures described in the Student Handbook at the following website: www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/. The student should attempt to resolve the issue with the faculty member or teaching assistant involved. Lacking a satisfactory outcome, the student can turn to the department chair. If a satisfactory outcome still is not obtained, the student can turn to the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Complaints may concern inappropriate faculty conduct (including inappropriate course materials), incompetence in oral communications, inequities in assignments, scheduling of examinations at other than authorized and published times, failure to provide disability accommodations, or grading grievances. FSU has a specific policy regarding sexual harassment - this can be found at http://www.auditservices.fsu.edu/.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**
All students are bound by the Academic Honor Policy (http://www.fsu.edu/~dof/academics.htm). You are expected to be honest and honorable in your fulfillment of assignments and in test-taking situations. Plagiarism and cheating are serious forms of academic misconduct. Examples of them are given in the Student Handbook: http://www.fsu.edu/Books/Student-Handbook/2003codes/honor.html. The department of Political Science works with individual instructors to detect plagiarism and cheating and to ensure that appropriately serious punishments are applied. Instructors who detect cheating or plagiarism may decide to reduce the student’s grade on the assignment or course, even to assign an F. The instructor will discuss the matter with the student, put any agreement regarding academic penalty in writing signed by both the instructor and the student, and report the infraction to the Chair and the University judicial office. If no agreement can be reached, the instructor refers the matter to the Academic Honor system Hearing Panel.

**Your Responsibilities**
Your responsibilities to this class - and to your education as a whole - include attendance and participation. This syllabus details specific expectations the instructor may have about attendance and participation. You have a responsibility to help create a classroom environment where all may learn. At the most basic level, this means you will respect the other members of the class and the instructor and treat them with the courtesy you hope to receive in turn.

**Plus-Minus Grading**
All the department’s instructors can append plus or minus grades to the letter grades they assign for the course. If the instructor does not specifically indicate in the syllabus that he or she will not assign plusses or minuses, students should assume that this form of grading will be used.

Please visit the Political Science Department’s website: http://www.fsu.edu/~polisci/. It is frequently updated with new events and procedures in our department.