POSC 282: Terrorism and Violence in World Politics

Carleton College - Spring 2015

Instructor: Hicham Bou Nassif
Email: Hnassif@Carleton.edu
Office: Willis Hall – 408
Office hours: Monday 12:30 pm – 1:40pm. Wednesday: 3:40pm – 5:00pm.

Course Description

This course analyzes theories of terrorism, ethnic conflict and civil wars. Who becomes a terrorist and why? How do terrorist organizations recruit? Does terrorism work? Why or why not? What do we know about some of the most dangerous terrorist organizations active on the world scene today? And why did ethnic conflicts and civil wars become pervasive in modern times? These are some of the questions we will be tackling in this course. Overall, the course has three main goals: 1) To offer students the opportunity to become more conversant with the debates relating to terrorism and violence. 2) To sharpen students’ analytical and writing skills. 3) To heighten students’ understanding of some of most lethal conflicts, and terrorist organizations currently active in world politics.

Texts


Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror, New York: Regan Arts, 2015.

Course Requirements

Class attendance (10% of your final grade)

Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each session. Each student starts the class with 10 attendance point. You will lose 0.5 points from your attendance grade every time you are absent. For instance if you miss 4 classes you will receive 8 instead of 10 attendance points. Only documented absences will be accepted (e.g. doctor’s note).
Participation (20% of your final grade)

Students are expected to participate actively in the class. I will be asking you to contribute to class discussions and will invite you to offer your opinion on required readings or on related events unfolding as the course goes on.

Mid-term (30% of your final grade)

The Mid-term will be divided into two parts: 1) A series of questions to which you will be expected to reply with short answers. The questions will cover all the material discussed in class from the first lecture to the last. 2) An essay you will be asked to write and which will test your ability to think critically on the material we covered. Reading the material and notes is indispensable to do well in the exam, but it takes more than just that. You must demonstrate an ability to reflect analytically on the topic and express your own opinions and ideas. You will only be responsible for the required reading. The recommended reading is for your own intellectual development, but will not be included in the exam.

Final paper (40% of your final grade)

(10% for the presentation in class and 30% for the paper itself)

What is expected of you as you do the readings?

The readings assigned for the course deal with the most fundamental challenges pertaining to terrorism and violence in world politics. As you read, you will be expected to think critically on the articles by asking yourselves the following questions:

1)  What is the author’s main argument?
2)  Do I find that argument convincing or not? Why?
3)  What alternative explanations can be thought of for the author’s evidence?
4)  What are the implications of the argument made by the author?

In addition to the required readings, you are encouraged to keep yourself informed about current issues related to world politics. Consulting newspapers helps a great deal. Keep also an eye on journals such as Foreign Affairs and International Security.

Reading assignments

Monday, 30/3: Syllabus

We will discuss the Syllabus in class.
**Wednesday, 1/4: Introduction and Definition**

Mingst and Arruguin-Toft, pp 278 – 283.

**Friday, 3/4: The Goals and Strategies of Terrorism (1)**


**Monday 6/4: The Goals and Strategies of Terrorism (2)**

Pape, pp 27-60.

**Wednesday 8/4: Becoming a Terrorist (1)**


**Friday 10/4: Becoming a Terrorist (2)**

Pape, pp 199 - 234

**Monday 13/4: Does Terrorism Work? (1)**


**Wednesday 15/4: Does Terrorism Work? (2)**


**Friday 17/4: ISIS as a case study (1)**


**Monday 20/4: ISIS as a case study (2)**

**Wednesday 22/4: Al-Qaeda as a case study (1)**


**Friday 24/4: Al-Qaeda as a case study (2)**


**Monday 27/4: Documentary and class debate**

**Wednesday 29/4: No class**

**Friday 1/5: In-class Review Session**

**Monday 4/5: Mid Term Break**

**Wednesday 6/5: Mid-Term**

**Friday 8/5: Documentary and class debate**

**Monday 11/5: Hezbollah as a case study (1)**

Levit, pp 1 -69.

**Wednesday 13/5: Hezbollah as a case study (2)**

Blanford, pp 40 -95.

Thanassis Cambanis, pp 21- 40.

**Friday 15/5: Civil War (1)**

Kalyvas *in* Boix and Stokes (pp416-434)

**Monday 18/5: Civil War (2)**

Levy and Thompson (pp 186-204)
Wednesday 20/5: Ethnic Conflict (1)
Kaufman (pp1-48)

Friday 22/5: Ethnic Conflict (2)
Petersen (pp 17-84)

Monday 25/5: Presentations and class debate

Wednesday 27/5: Presentations and class debate

Friday 29/5: Presentations and class debate

Monday 1/6: Presentations and class debate

Wednesday 3/6: Presentations and class debate