Terrorism, Insurgency and Political Violence

PO352701
Department of Political Science
Boston College

Summer 2014
Tue, Thu 6:00-9:15pm
Room Campion 300

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Course Description
Terrorism and insurgency dominate the headlines today, but how much do we really know about these forms of political violence? Are they inventions from the modern era, or do they have a deeper past? What drives an individual to join an armed group? Why do some groups choose to employ violence, while others do not? Are terrorism and insurgency effective political tactics? Just how significant is the threat of terrorism? This course will address these and other questions, while introducing students to relevant analytical frameworks, theories, and cases concerning terrorism, insurgency, and related forms of political violence.

In addition to its topical focus, this course could rightly be called a methods course. Students in the class will learn how to improve their analytical thinking, conduct high quality research, and present an effective argument, both orally and in writing. They will learn the potential and pitfalls of theories of political violence through constant analysis and engagement with the history of terrorism and insurgency. By the conclusion of the course, students will emerge not only with a far richer understanding of these issues, but also as more sophisticated consumers, analysts, and producers of knowledge.

Course Requirements
Course grades will be based on:

Class Participation (20%)
Students are required to take an active role in the class. This means completing the assigned readings for each class, showing up to class regularly and on time, and participating consistently in class discussion and debates with quality contributions. It cannot be stressed enough that you are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that session. This class will never be 180 minutes of lecture. Every class will include significant amounts of time for a variety of different guided, engaged discussions and debates of the readings and the relevant issues they address. All students are expected to engage in class discussion; those who do not do so on their own initiative will be regularly invited to do so by me. You should plan to speak in every class. If you regularly prepare and engage with your reading outside of class, and with the lectures and discussions in class meetings, you will be pleasantly surprised at how much information you can engage with on a sophisticated level in no time.

More than one absence from class will lead to a reduction in a student’s participation grade. If you
have to miss class for a justifiable reason—religious observance, serious illness, etc.—notify me before you will miss class, not after the fact. Cell phones must be turned off during class. Laptops are permitted in class, but use of laptops for non-course-related purposes (emails, texting, etc.) will result in a significant reduction of a student's participation grade. The participation grade includes the completion of smaller assignments throughout the course, although the majority of your participation grade will be based on the quality and quantity of your verbal participation in class meetings.

*Exam #1 (35%): July 22 in class*

Students will be responsible for material covered in both lectures and required readings—which will not always overlap—for the exam.

*Final Research Paper (45%: 40% paper, 5% proposal): Proposal due July 17 in class, Paper due July 31 in class*

All students will write a significant research paper of 15-20 pages. Students will consult with me for their choice of topic, complete an initial two-page proposal, meet with me to discuss revisions, and submit the final copy at the end of the semester. Students should start thinking about possible research topics from the first week of class. Students will select their topics and submit their proposals by July 17 in class.

**Course Grading**

Satisfactory completion of the assignments in this class is likely to earn a grade in the B range, not the A range. A B-, B, or B+ in this course is generally evidence of hard work and middling to high quality performance. A grade in the C range represents middling to lower quality work that contains one or two significant problems, while a grade in the D range represents work that accomplishes the bare minimum required and possesses a significant number of glaring problems. To receive an A of any kind in this course requires very hard work and dedication throughout the semester, superior performance in each aspect of the course, and significant originality. Mastering the concepts and arguments made by other scholars is a key part of the course, but to reach your potential as a student you must skillfully incorporate your own unique ideas into your comments in class, exams, and papers on a regular basis.

Late work is docked one letter grade for every 12 hours that it is late. Extensions are not commonly given, but the only circumstances in which they are given include you notifying me well in advance of the due date of the need for an extension with a justifiable reason. Last-minute requests for extensions due to poor planning will not be granted.

**Zero-Tolerance Policy on Plagiarism & Academic Dishonesty**

Academic integrity will be vigorously enforced. Academic integrity is central to the mission of higher education. You should observe the highest standards of academic integrity in this course. Please review BC’s standards and procedures on the web: www.bc.edu/integrity. Make sure that the work you submit is in accordance with university policies. Plagiarizing the work of academics or other students is unacceptable. Formal citation of others’ ideas must be included in course assignments where applicable, and you may not turn in work completed for another course. I will provide you with handouts on when and how to cite correctly. If you have any questions, please consult with me. Violations will be reported to the Deans' Office and reviewed by the College's Committee on Academic Integrity. This could result in failure in the course or even more severe sanctions.
Students with a Learning Disability

Students with a learning disability should meet with me as early as possible in the semester. Please bring documentation from the University Coordinator of Academic Support Services with you so that we can make arrangements that will allow you to perform at your best. If you are a student with a documented disability seeking reasonable accommodations in this course, please contact Kathy Duggan, (617) 552-8093, dugganka@bc.edu, at the Connors Family Learning Center regarding learning disabilities and ADHD, or Paulette Durrett, (617) 552-3470, paulette.durrett@bc.edu, in the Disability Services Office regarding all other types of disabilities, including temporary disabilities. Advance notice and appropriate documentation are required for accommodations.

News Sources

This is not a current events class; however, students are encouraged to engage with ongoing news stories related to terrorism, insurgency, and political violence throughout the course (e.g. the civil war in Syria, the ongoing struggle with Al-Qaeda and its affiliates, and recent attacks in Boston and Nigeria) and make connections with course readings and historical cases. Students’ time should be focused on the required course readings, but briefly checking a few news sources on a regular basis will significantly enhance students’ knowledge of terrorism, insurgency, and political violence as well as the impact of this course. Beyond basic news outlets, online scholarly magazines like *Foreign Affairs* and *Foreign Policy* offer short, sharp articles that provide more depth than general news media.

Required Books for Purchase (Available at the BC Bookstore or online)


Course Films


Course Readings

There is a significant amount of required reading for the course, and you are expected to complete all of it on time. Please note that sections of articles or books are often assigned; note the assigned pages before reading sections that are not required. This course will teach you how to read actively for argument and evidence, rather than passively allowing the readings to wash over you. This approach will shorten the time you spend on reading while improving your understanding and retention of relevant information. Be prepared to discuss the main arguments and evidence of each required reading during class discussion. Please note that readings are subject to change, but this is rare and advance notification will be given. I recommend additional readings that you may consult for additional background, insight, and reference. You will not be tested on the recommended readings, but they will help you flesh out your knowledge in any area in which you have a particular interest. All required readings for the course are either in your purchased books or are available online in the course Canvas site, the Library’s Electronic Reserves system, or in the Library’s HOLMES Electronic Journals database. Students should immediately familiarize themselves with the mechanics involved.
Class Plan

CLASS 1: What are Terrorism and Insurgency? Definitions and Cases Across History
June 24: Introduction and Defining Terrorism and Insurgency
   Terrorism: A New or Old Phenomenon?

CLASS 2: Individual Level Causes and Objectives of Terrorism and Insurgency
June 26: Psychology, Economics and Education
   Religion, Ideology, and Lone Wolves

CLASS 3: Organizational, Strategic Level Causes and Objectives of Terrorism and Insurgency
July 1: Solidarity, Networks, and Numbers; Organizational Survival and Competition
   Political Grievances and Occupation; Failed States and State Sponsors

CLASS 4: Methods and Mechanisms: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency
July 3: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency - Academics
   Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency - Practitioners

CLASS 5: Methods and Mechanisms: Suicide Bombing, WMD, Morality, and the Media
July 8: Suicide Bombing and Weapons of Mass Destruction in Terrorism and Insurgency
   Morality, Emotions, and the Media in Terrorism and Insurgency

CLASS 6: The Impact and Effectiveness of Terrorism and Insurgency
July 10: Individual and Organizational Level Effects: Fear, Casualties, Support, Group Strength
   Strategic Level Effects: Political Concessions, Military Withdrawals, New States

CLASS 7: Al-Qaeda
July 15: Al-Qaeda: The Past
   Al-Qaeda: The Present and Future

CLASS 8: The Boundaries of Terrorism: Insurgency, State Terror, and Nonviolence
July 17: Insurgency and Civil War; Non-Lethal Violence and Nonviolence
   States and Terrorism: Repression, Mass Violence, and Genocide

CLASS 9: Exam
July 22: Exam in class

CLASS 10: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency
July 24: How Terrorism and Insurgency End
   Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Debates: Ends, Means, and Resources

CLASS 11: The Future of Terrorism and Insurgency for Individuals, States, and Societies
July 29: (Counter)Terrorism and Society: Justice, Homeland Security, and Political Freedoms
   Drones, the National Security Agency, and the American Approach to Counterterrorism

CLASS 12: The Boston Marathon Bombings
July 31: Definitions, Causes, and the Media
   Effects, Community Response, and Lessons for the Future
Readings and Class Schedule

Before Classes Begin

By Monday, June 23 at 5pm (the day before the first class meeting), you must email Professor Krause your own 1-2 sentence definition of “terrorism” without consulting any sources. Please send your definition to peter.krause.2@bc.edu with the subject heading “PO352701 Terrorism Definition”. This assignment will be graded for timely completion.

June 24: What are Terrorism and Insurgency? Definitions and Cases Across History

Key Questions
How do scholars, governments, the media, and the public define terrorism and insurgency?
Are terrorism and insurgency distinct concepts? How are they similar and different?
Is terrorism a new or old phenomenon?
What are some key cases of terrorism and insurgency?

Skills Introduced
Defining and comparing concepts

Part I: Introduction and Defining Terrorism and Insurgency

Required Readings
- Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 1, pp. 1-41

Recommended Readings

Part 2: Terrorism: A New or Old Phenomenon?

Required Readings
- Alexander Spencer and Rohan Gunaratna, “Is the New Terrorism Really New?” in Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 1, pp. 1-34

Recommended Readings
June 26: Individual Level Causes and Objectives of Terrorism and Insurgency

Key Questions
Who are the key actors in terrorism and insurgency campaigns?
What are the levels of analysis for examining terrorism and insurgency?
Do mental illness, poverty, a lack of education, ideology or religion cause terrorism?
How can an individual become radicalized? Is ‘radicalization’ necessary to commit terrorism?

Skills Introduced
How to read as a scholar and analyst: Identifying and critiquing arguments
What is political science? Understanding variables, theories, predictions, tests, and evidence

Part 1: Psychology, Economics and Education

Required Readings
• James A. Piazza and Karin von Hippel, “Does Poverty Serve as a Root Cause of Terrorism?” in Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 2, pp. 35-68

Recommended Readings

Part 2: Religion, Ideology, and Lone Wolves

Required Readings
• James Dawes, “Why a Man Eats Another Man’s Heart,” CNN, May 16, 2013

Recommended Readings

**July 1: Organizational, Strategic Level Causes and Objectives of Terrorism and Insurgency**

**Key Questions**
- Are most terrorist attacks committed by unconnected individuals or organizations?
- What is collective action and when is it achieved?
- When and why does organizations’ pursuit of strength and survival generate violence?
- What political environments and government types make terrorism more likely?
- Does military occupation cause terrorism?

**Skills Introduced**
Causal Inference: How do we know when X causes Y?

**Part 1: Solidarity, Networks, and Numbers; Organizational Survival and Competition**

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**

**Part 2: Political Grievances and Occupation; Failed States and State Sponsors**

**Required Readings**
• Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, Ch. 2, pp. 43-62

**Recommended Readings**


**July 3: Methods and Mechanisms: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency**

**Key Questions**
What are the main strategies of terrorism and insurgency?
What is the causal logic of each strategy?
Under what conditions is each strategy most likely to succeed or fail?
Do observers’ assessments of terrorist strategies match with those of the perpetrators?

**Skills Introduced**
Identifying and explaining causal mechanisms
Linking theory and practice
Identifying gaps in scholarship

**Part 1: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency- Academics**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**


**Part 2: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency- Practitioners**

**Required Readings**

• Ayman Al-Zawahiri letter to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, July 9, 2005

Recommended Readings

July 8: Methods and Mechanisms: Suicide Bombing, WMD, Morality, and the Media

*Key Questions*
Are suicide bombing and WMD attacks major threats? How can we assess intentions vs. capability? Why do some groups choose to employ these methods and others do not? How do feelings of rage, humiliation, fear, depression, revenge, and injustice impact terrorism? How does the media impact the causes, mechanisms, and effects of terrorism? How should the media balance profit, the public’s ‘need to know,’ and responsibility to society?

*Skills Introduced*
Generating and analyzing competing arguments
Assessing and utilizing qualitative concepts

Part 1: Suicide Bombing and Weapons of Mass Destruction in Terrorism and Insurgency

*Required Readings*
• Matthew Bunn and Susan Martin, “Is Nuclear Terrorism a Real Threat?” in Gottlieb, *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, Ch. 6, pp. 172-199

*Recommended Readings*
• Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill: The Allure of Suicide Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005)

Part 2: Morality, Emotions, and the Media in Terrorism and Insurgency

*Required Readings*
PO352701: TIPV Syllabus


**Recommended Readings**

**July 10: The Impact and Effectiveness of Terrorism and Insurgency**

**Key Questions**
How many people are killed and wounded by terrorist and insurgent attacks?
Do terrorism and insurgency achieve the personal goals of the attackers?
How does the use of violence impact the strength and survival of organizations?
When and why does the public support terrorism and insurgency?
Do terrorism and insurgency generate political concessions? Do they win wars?
What is the economic and social impact of terrorism and insurgency?

**Skills Introduced**
Conceptualizing and measuring effects
Marshaling and analyzing relevant evidence

**Part 1: Individual and Organizational Level Effects: Fear, Casualties, Support, Group Strength**

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**

**Part 2: Strategic Level Effects: Political Concessions, Military Withdrawals, New States**

**Required Readings**

**Recommended Readings**


**July 15: Al-Qaeda**

**Key Questions**
What are the origins of Al-Qaeda? What is its ideology and strategy?
What is transnational terrorism and what distinguishes it from other types?
Is Al-Qaeda a unique group, or do they share similarities with other organizations?
Is Al-Qaeda on the ropes, on the rise, or at an impasse? What is its future?

**Skills Introduced**
How to write a research paper

**Part 1: Al-Qaeda: The Past**

**Required Readings**

- Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, Ch. 5-20

**Recommended Readings**


**Part 2: Al-Qaeda: The Present and Future**

**Required Readings**


**Recommended Readings**

July 17: The Boundaries of Terrorism: Insurgency, State Terror, and Nonviolence

Key Questions
What is the same and different about the causes, mechanisms, and effects of insurgency and civil war as compared to terrorism?
When and why is nonviolence more effective than terrorism and insurgency?
Is there ‘ecoterrorism’ and is it comparable to other forms of terrorism?
Is there “state terrorism”? Should we adjust the common definition of terrorism to include it?
How many civilians do states and non-state actors kill? What are the causes of mass killing by states?

Part 1: Insurgency and Civil War

Required Readings

Recommended Readings

Part 2: States and Terrorism- Repression, Mass Violence, and Genocide

Required Readings
• Ruth Blakeley, “Bringing the State Back into Terrorism Studies,” European Political Science Vol. 6, No. 3 (September 2007) pp. 228-236

Recommended Readings

July 22: Exam in Class
July 24: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency

Key Questions
When, why, and how do terrorism and insurgency end?
What are the objectives and strategies of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency?
What are the organizations involved in U.S. counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts?
Do counterterrorism and counterinsurgency work? Do they have unintended consequences?

Skills Introduced
Linking theory and evidence to policy, and vice versa

Part 1: How Terrorism and Insurgency End

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
- Seth G. Jones and Martin C. Libicki, How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al Qa’ida (Santa Monica, Calif: RAND, 2008)
- Ben Connable and Martin Libicki, "How Insurgencies End," (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2010)

Part 2: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency Debates: Ends, Means, and Resources

Required Readings
- Brigitte Nacos and Michael Rubin, “Counterterrorism Strategies: Do We Need Bombs Over Bridges?” in Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 7, pp. 209-242
- Gregory Gause and Jennifer Windsor, “Can Spreading Democracy Help Defeat Terrorism?” in Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 8, pp. 243-275

Recommended Readings
- Ian Lustick, Trapped in the War on Terror (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

July 29: The Future of Terrorism and Insurgency for Individuals, States, and Societies
**Key Questions**

Is terrorism a significant threat to you, your society, your country, and the world?
How does the U.S. justice system deal with terrorism and terrorist suspects and perpetrators?
What are the tactics of the Department of Homeland Security for counterterrorism?
Is the current U.S. approach to counterterrorism and counterinsurgency the right one?
How should the U.S. balance concerns of security and liberty in dealing with terrorism?

**Skills Introduced**

How to frame predictions

**Part 1: (Counter)Terrorism and Society: Justice, Homeland Security, and Political Freedoms**

**Required Readings**

- Charles Kenny, “Airport Security is Killing Us,” *Businessweek* (November 18, 2012)
- M.S., “Why We Spy: The War on Terror is Obama’s Vietnam,” *The Economist* (June 10, 2013)
- Michael Posner and Alan Dershowitz, “Is an Outright Ban the Best Way to Eliminate or Constrain Torture?” in Gottlieb, *Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, Ch.10, pp. 312-344

**Recommended Readings**


**Part 2: Drones, the National Security Agency, and the American Approach to Counterterrorism**

**Required Readings**

- Daniel Byman, “Why Drones Work” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2013)
- Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Why Drones Fail” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2013)

**Recommended Readings**


**July 31: The Boston Marathon Bombings**

**Key Questions**

How do theory and history help us to explain what happened? Were these attacks ‘terrorism’?
What were the causes of the attacks? How did various types of media cover them?
What aspects of this attack were common, anomalous?
Why did the government and the community react the way that they did? Should anything have been done differently?
Skills Introduced
How to apply theory to current events

Part 1: Definitions, Causes, and the Media
Required Readings
• Ken Bensinger and Andrea Chang, “Boston Bombings: Social Media Spirals Out of Control,” The Los Angeles Times (April 20, 2013)
• “Rolling Stone Defends Cover Featuring Boston Marathon Bombing Suspect,” CBS News (July 17, 2013)

Part 2: Effects, Community Response, and Lessons for the Future
Required Readings
• Wardah Khalid, “Day by Day: An American Muslim’s Thoughts After the Boston Attack,” The Huffington Post (April 23, 2013)
• Anonymous Security Professional, “Thoughts on Responding to the Boston Bombings”
• Peter Krause, “BC Should Respond to Attacks with Renewed Community Spirit,” The Heights (April 15, 2013)
• Arthur Tedesco, “Students Organize ‘Last 5’ Walk, Vigil as Memorial Events,” The Heights (April 18, 2013)
• “Group Finishes Boston Marathon,” ESPN (May 25, 2013)