Terrorism, Insurgency and Political Violence

POLI3527  
Summer 2016
Department of Political Science  
Mon, Wed 6:00-9:15pm
Boston College  
Room TBA

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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 close to 195 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. This is a seminar with fewer than 20 students, so 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 analyze on a sophisticated level in no time.
More than one unexcused absence from class will lead to a significant 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 not permitted in class except on certain days that I will inform you about ahead of time. Bring hard copies of all readings to class. 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%): June 6 in class
Students will be responsible for material covered in both lectures and required readings—which will not always overlap—for the exam.

Research Paper (45%: 35% paper, 10% proposal): Proposal due June 8 in class, Paper due June 22 in class. All students will write a significant research paper of 15-20 pages. Students will complete an initial 3-4 page proposal, meet with me to discuss revisions, and submit the final paper 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 June 8 in class.

Course Grading
You cannot take this course pass/fail. 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 evidence of hard work and middle 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 scholar 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](http://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 and trials in Paris and Boston) and make connections with course readings and historical cases. Students’ time should be focused on the required course readings, but 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. Online scholarly magazines like Foreign Affairs and Foreign Policy offer short, sharp articles that provide more depth to supplement general news media.

Required Books for Purchase (Available at the BC Bookstore or online)
1) Inside Terrorism by Bruce Hoffman, Revised and Enlarged Edition, 2006

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. You should complete the readings in the order that they are listed, as the order is not random. 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. 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 on-line in the course Canvas site. Students should immediately familiarize themselves with the mechanics involved.
Class Plan

CLASS 1: What are Terrorism and Insurgency? Definitions and Cases Across History
May 18: Defining Terrorism and Insurgency: A New or Old Phenomenon?

CLASS 2: Causes and Objectives of Terrorism and Insurgency
Organizational and Strategic Level Causes: Organizational Competition, Political Grievances

CLASS 3: Methods and Mechanisms: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency
May 25: Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency- Academics
Strategies of Terrorism and Insurgency- Practitioners

CLASS 4: Methods and Mechanisms: Suicide Bombing, WMD, Emotions and the Media
May 30: Suicide Bombing and Weapons of Mass Destruction in Terrorism and Insurgency
Morality, Emotions, and the Media in Terrorism and Insurgency

CLASS 5: The Impact and Effectiveness of Terrorism and Insurgency
June 1: Individual and Organizational Level Effects: Fear, Casualties, Support, Group Strength
Strategic Level Effects: Political Concessions, Military Withdrawals, New States

CLASS 6: Exam
June 6: Exam
“If a Tree Falls”

CLASS 7: The Boundaries of Terrorism: Nonviolence and State Terror
June 8: Nonviolence and Non-Lethal Violence
States and Terrorism: Repression, Mass Violence, and Genocide

CLASS 8: Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and The Insurgencies in Iraq and Syria
June 13: Al-Qaeda: The Past, Present, and Future
The Causes, Dynamics, and Effects of ISIS and the Insurgencies

CLASS 9: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency I
June 15: How Terrorism and Insurgency End
CT and COIN Debates: Hard & Soft Power, Democratization, Threat Inflation

CLASS 10: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency II
June 20: The Freedom of Speech, Profiling and Airport Security, Torture
Drones and Intelligence Agencies

CLASS 11: The Boston Marathon Bombings and the Future of Terrorism
June 22: Definitions, Causes, the Media, Effects, and Community Response
Remaining Questions and Lessons Learned
Readings and Class Schedule

Before Classes Begin

By Tuesday, May 17 at noon (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 “PO3527 Terrorism Definition”. This assignment will be graded for timely completion.

CLASS 1: 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

May 18: Defining Terrorism and Insurgency: A New or Old Phenomenon?

Required Readings
- Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 1, pp. 1-41
- Alexander Spencer and Rohan Gunaratna, “Is the New Terrorism Really New?” in Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 1, pp. 1-34

Recommended Readings

CLASS 2: 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?
- How can an individual become radicalized? Is ‘radicalization’ necessary to commit terrorism?
- When and why does organizations’ pursuit of strength and survival generate violence?
- Does military occupation cause 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
How to generate theories and hypotheses

May 23


Required Readings

- “Global Terrorism Index 2014,” Institute for Economics and Peace, p. 59

Recommended 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

Part 2: Organizational and Strategic Level Causes: Organizational Competition, Political Grievances

Required Readings

- Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 2, pp. 43-62

Recommended Readings

- Daniel Byman, Deadly Connections: States That Sponsor Terrorism (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
CLASS 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
How to generate and frame general and specific research questions
Identifying and explaining causal mechanisms
Identifying gaps in scholarship

May 25
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

CLASS 4: Methods and Mechanisms: Suicide Bombing, WMD, Emotions, 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
Operationalizing variables and testing predictions

May 30
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

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

Required Readings
- Agence France-Presse, “Paris Supermarket Hostages Sue Media Over Live Coverage” (April 3, 2015)

Recommended Readings
CLASS 5: 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
Generating and analyzing competing arguments
What is a case? Case selection and research design

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

Required Readings
• David Chalmers, Backfire: How the Ku Klux Klan Helped the Civil Rights Movement (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2003) pp. 137-144

Recommended Readings
• “Global Terrorism Index 2014,” Institute for Economics and Peace

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

Required Readings

Recommended Readings
• Max Abrahms and Peter Krause Exchange on Krause’s Security Studies Article, H-Diplo (2013)
CLASS 6: Exam
June 6
Part 1: Exam

Part 2: “If a Tree Falls”

CLASS 7: The Boundaries of Terrorism: Nonviolence and State Terror

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?

Skills Introduced
Comparing cases

June 8 (Proposal Due)

Part 1: Nonviolence and Non-Lethal Violence

Required Readings
- Blythe Copeland, “5 Ways Sea Shepherd's Controversial Methods are Changing the World For Whales,” *Treehugger* (February 23, 2011)

Recommended Readings

Part 2: States and Rebel Governance: State Terrorism and Insurgents as State Builders

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**


**CLASS 8: Al-Qaeda, ISIS, and The Insurgencies in Iraq and Syria**

**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 on the ropes, on the rise, or at an impasse? What is its future?
How and why did the insurgencies in Iraq and Syria begin?
How was ISIS created, and what explains its variation in strategy and effectiveness over time?

**Skills Introduced**

How to write a research paper

**June 13**

**Part 1: Al-Qaeda: The Past, Present, and Future**

**Required Readings**

• Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower*, Ch. 5-7, 13-20
• Osama Bin Laden, “Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places” (August 23, 1996)

**Recommended Readings**

• “Bin Laden’s Bookshelf” (Collection of Documents Captured During Raid on May 1, 2011)
• “Al-Qaeda’s Use of Female Suicide Bombers in Iraq: A Case Study,” in *Women, Gender, and Terrorism*, Laura Sjoberg and Caron Gentry, eds. (Athens, University of Georgia Press, 2011), pp. 159-175

**Part 2: The Causes, Dynamics, and Effects of ISIS and the Insurgencies**

**Required Readings**

• Christoph Reuter, “The Terror Strategist: Secret Files Reveal the Structure of Islamic State,” *Spiegel Online* (April 18, 2015)
• Thomas Hegghammer, “Syria’s Foreign Fighters,” *Foreign Policy* (December 9, 2013)
• Ariel Ahram, “Sexual and Ethnic Violence and the Construction of the Islamic State,” *Political Violence* @ a Glance (September 18, 2014)

**Recommended Readings**
• Roula Khalaf and Sam Jones, “Selling Terror: How ISIS Details Its Brutality,” *Financial Times* (June 17, 2014)
• James Fearon, “Obstacles to Ending Syria’s Civil War,” *Foreign Policy* (December 10, 2013)
• Baghdadi’s first speech after declaration of ‘caliphate’” (July 1, 2014)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VOORW63ioY0

**CLASS 9: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency I**

**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

**June 15**
**Part 1: How Terrorism and Insurgency End**

**Required Readings**
• Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, “Mowing the Grass in Gaza,” BESA Center Paper No. 255, July 2014

**Recommended Readings**
• Micah Zenko, “Terrorism is Booming Almost Everywhere But in the United States,” *Foreign Policy* (June 19, 2015)
• 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: CT and COIN Debates: Hard & Soft Power, Democratization, Threat Inflation**

**Required Readings**
• Ayaan Hirsi Ali, “A Problem From Heaven,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015)
• Williams McCants, “Islamic Scripture Is Not the Problem,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2015)
• Gregory Gause and Jennifer Windsor, “Can Spreading Democracy Help Defeat Terrorism?” in Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 8, pp. 243-275

Recommended 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
• Peter Krause and Stephen Van Evera, “Public Diplomacy: Ideas for the War of Ideas,” Middle East Policy Vol. 16, No. 3 (Fall 2009) pp. 106-134
• Ian Lustick, Trapped in the War on Terror (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006)

CLASS 10: Counterterrorism and Counterinsurgency II

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

June 20

Required Readings
• “Twitter suspends account of Hamas’ military wing,” Haaretz (January 14, 2014)
• Matthew Yglesias, “Two—But Only Two—Cheers for Blasphemy,” Vox (January 8, 2015)
• Charles Kenny, “Airport Security is Killing Us,” Businessweek (November 18, 2012)
• 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
• John Yoo and David Cole, “Counterterrorism and the Constitution: Does Providing Security Require a Trade-off with Civil Liberties?” in Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Ch. 11, pp. 345-379

Recommended Readings
• Ron Hassner, “Fundamentalist Wrath,” Washington Post (January 12, 2015)
• Matthew Alexander, How to Break a Terrorist (New York: Free Press, 2008)
Part 2: Drones and Intelligence Agencies

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

CLASS 11: The Boston Marathon Bombings and The Future of Terrorism

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? Why did the government and the community react the way that they did? Should anything have been done differently? What are the major lessons we learned in this course? What questions remain unanswered? What is the future of terrorism, insurgency, and political violence?

June 22

Part 1: Definitions, Causes, the Media, Effects, and Community Response

Required Readings
- Anonymous Security Professional, “Thoughts on Responding to the Boston Bombings”

Part 2: Remaining Questions and Lessons Learned