

The Politics of Terrorism

PLSC 439

Summer Session II: 2019

Willard Building 169

Monday – Friday, 11:10 a.m. – 12:25 p.m.

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Office Hours: 2:00 – 3:00 p.m., Monday and Wednesday;
9:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m., Tuesday and Thursday;
Or by appointment.

Terrorism has become a significant national security concern of the United States, and as a result, it now shapes U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Given the rising role of terrorism in public discourse and policy making in the United States, and in many other countries, it is important that we understand the causes and consequences of terrorism. This course is designed to provide an overview of the academic study of terrorism and to address many of the important puzzles and questions in the field. These questions include: What is terrorism? Is studying terrorism worth it? What is the strategic value of terrorism? Why do militant groups use terrorism? What countries are more likely to be the targets of terrorist attacks? Why do some individuals turn to terrorism? What are the consequences of terrorism? How can terrorism be prevented?

This course is taught from a political science perspective. As a result, many of the readings in this class are written by academic researchers, not policy makers, and many of these readings also use quantitative research methods. However, no prior experience with statistical methods is necessary, as the class will focus on the broader theoretical arguments and findings of these readings.

Course Learning Objectives

The course learning objectives include the following. By the end of the course:

1. Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of some of the major explanations of the causes and consequences of terrorism.
2. Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of some of the prominent academic works on terrorism.
3. Students will demonstrated the ability to reflect on and write about major concepts in terrorism studies.

4. Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to apply theories of terrorism to real life militant groups, countries, and policy making scenarios.

Course Requirements

All assignments are take-home and will be submitted through the assignments tab on Canvas. Students' grades in the course are determined in the following manner:

1. Take-Home Reading Quizzes – 25% (5 Quizzes Valued at 5% Each)
2. Take-Home Exam 1 – Analysis of a Terrorist Group – 25%
3. Take-Home Exam 2 – Analysis of Terrorism in a Country – 25%
4. Take-Home Exam 3 – Policy Recommendations – 25%

Take-Home Reading Quizzes. 5 take-home reading quizzes will be give throughout the semester. Each quiz covers a different reading. All questions will be short-answer. The instructor will post these quizzes on Canvas. These are all due at 11:59 p.m. on their respective due dates.

Take-Home Exam 1. The first take-home exam asks students to write about how well theories of terrorist groups apply to a specific group. Students will select one militant group from a list provided by the instructor. The first part of the paper will give a brief background on the group (e.g., where and when it formed, its ideology, its goals, etc.). The second part of the paper will apply group-level theories learned in class to the group chosen by the student in order to determine how well these theories explain the behavior and experiences of the group. Students should apply at least two of the lessons in the exam, but they do not need to apply all of them. This assignment should be 3 – 5 pages in length, double-spaced, one inch margins on all sides, with a legible font. A bibliography should be included at the end.

Take-Home Exam 2. The second take-home exam asks students to write about how well country-level theories of terrorism apply to a specific country. Students will select one country from a list provided by the instructor. This paper will briefly examine characteristics of a country that are often associated with the prevalence of terrorism (e.g., regime type, economic development, gender equality, etc.). The paper will then examine if terrorism is as prevalent in the country as the academic literature would predict, given the actual characteristics of the country. Students should apply at least two of the lessons in the exam, but they do not need to apply all of them. This assignment should be 3 – 5 pages in length, double-spaced, one inch margins on all sides, with a legible font. A bibliography should be included at the end.

Take-Home Exam 3. The third take-home exam asks students to write about what policy recommendations they would make if they were a national security adviser. The first part of this paper will give recommendations on how to prevent terrorism before it ever occurs. The second part of this paper will give recommendations to combat ongoing problems of terrorism. This assignment should be 3 – 5 pages in length, double-spaced, one inch margins on all sides, with a legible font. A bibliography should be included at the end.

Note: There is no extra credit in the class. I calculate your course grade using only the requirements listed above.

Important Dates:

Reading Quizzes: Various Dates, See Class Schedule Below.

Exam 1: 07/22 @ 11:59 p.m.

Exam 2: 07/30 @ 11:59 p.m.

Exam 3: 08/09 @ 11:59 p.m.

Grading Scale: Course grades are calculated using the following grade scale:

A = 94 to 100

A- = 90 to 93

B+ = 87 to 89

B = 83 to 86

B- = 80 to 82

C+ = 77 to 79

C = 70 to 76

D = 60 to 69

F = 59 and below

Please note that The Penn State grading scale does not allow the option of awarding grades of C-, D+, or D- grades.

Late Policy: All assigned course materials will be penalized by one grade-point average for every working day (defined as a day on which Penn State holds classes) that they are not turned in. This means that the work is an automatic F if it is five or more days late. Extensions are obtainable only for personal illness or family emergency, and then only if you have proper documentation.

Incomplete Policy: No student will be given a grade of “I” (Incomplete) unless they fit the following criteria: (1) the request is being made due to a serious medical or personal emergency that will prevent you from finishing the class; (2) the emergency is properly document; and (3) the student is passing the class prior to the request. The request should be submitted as soon as the emergency arises. Note that poor performance in the class or fear that you will receive an F is not a sufficient reason to ask for an incomplete.

Statement on Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others. A full description of College policies and procedures regarding academic dishonesty can be found at CLA Academic Integrity website (<http://www.la.psu.edu/current-students/student-services/academic-integrity>).

Disability Accommodation Statement

Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides [contact information for every Penn State campus](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator) (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit [Student Disability Resources website](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/) (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/>).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: [See documentation guidelines](http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines) (<http://equity.psu.edu/sdr/guidelines>). If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

Counseling Services

Student counseling is through CAPS (Counseling and Psychological Services) in Student Affairs. You might also find the information Resources for Faculty/Staff, and Family useful. The CAPS program is located on the 5th floor of the Student Health Center. Students can call 814-863-0395 to set up a 10-15 minute non-crisis phone screening appointment to get started. There is also a 24/7 CRISIS Line: 877-229-6400. There is also the Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741.

Educational Equity and Report Bias Statements

Consistent with University Policy AD29, students who believe they have experienced or observed a hate crime, an act of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment that occurs at Penn State are urged to report these incidents as outlined on the [University's Report Bias webpage](http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/) (<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>).

Class Schedule

Unit 1: Introduction to Terrorism

Week 1: What is Terrorism? Definitional and Conceptual Issues – Part I

06/26 Course Introduction

06/27 What is Terrorism?

Read: Asal et al. (2012)

06/28 Biases in Defining Terrorism

Read: Boyle et al. (2017)

Nacos (2005)

Week 2: What is Terrorism? Definitional and Conceptual Issues – Part II and The Strategies and Logic of Terrorism Part I

07/01 Challenges in Defining Terrorism: The Credit Claiming Problem

*****Reading Quiz #1 Due*****

Read: Abrahms and Conrad (2017)

07/02 Is Studying Terrorism Worth It?

Read: Mueller (2005)

Unit 2: The Strategies and Logic of Terrorism

07/03 Overview

Read: Kydd and Walter (2006)

07/04 Holiday

Read: No Class

07/05 Is Terrorism Rational?

Read: Chenoweth et al. (2009)

Week 3: The Strategies and Logic of Terrorism Part II and the Group-Level Analysis of Terrorism Part I

07/08 Is Terrorism the Weapon of the Weak?

*****Reading Quiz #2 Due*****

Read: Fortna (2015)

07/09 Different Types of Terrorism – Part I: Suicide Terrorism

Read: Horowitz (2015)

07/10 Different Types of Terrorism – Part II: Kidnapping, Hostage Taking, and Hijacking

Read: Lee (2013)

07/11 Choosing Who Fights: The Logic of Female Suicide Bombers

Read: O'Rourke (2009)

*****Reading Quiz #3 Due*****

Unit 3: Group-Level Analysis of Terrorism

07/12 Terrorist Group Ideology

Read: Piazza (2009)

Week 4: Group-Level Analysis of Terrorism Part II

07/15 Organizational Characteristics of Terrorist Groups

*****Reading Quiz #4 Due*****

Read: Asal and Rethemeyer (2008)

07/16 The Survival of Terrorist Groups

Read: Jones and Libicki (2008)

07/17 The Reputation of Terrorist Groups

Read: Akcinaroglu and Tokdemir (2018)

07/18 The Use of Terrorism in Civil Wars

Read: Stanton (2013)

07/19 Why Terrorist Groups Engage in Crime

Read: Piazza and Piazza (2017)

Unit 4: Societal-Level Analysis of Terrorism

Week 5: Societal-Level Analysis of Terrorism

07/22 Poverty, Discrimination, and Terrorism

Read: Kavanagh (2011)

07/23 Democracy and Terrorism

Read: Chenoweth (2013)

07/24 Gender Equality and Terrorism

Read: Huber (2019)

07/25 State Failure and Terrorism

Read: Coggins (2015)

07/26 Domestic Terrorism in the United States

*****Reading Quiz #5 Due*****

Read: Piazza (2017)

Unit 5: Individual-Level Analysis of Terrorism

Week 6: Individual-Level Analysis of Terrorism and the Consequences of Terrorism

07/29 Assessing the Profile of a Terrorist

Read: Loken and Zelenz (2018)

07/30 Who is Targeted by Terrorist Recruiters?

Read: Merari et al. (2009)

Unit 6: Consequences of Terrorism

07/31 Does Terrorism Work? Yes.

Read: Thomas (2014)

08/01 Does Terrorism Work? No.

Read: Abrahms (2008)

08/02 The Political Consequences of Terrorism

Read: Berrebi and Klor (2008)

Unit 7: Counterterrorism

Week 7: Counterterrorism

08/05 Military Strategies

Read: Jordan (2009)

08/06 Nonviolent Counterterrorism Measures

Read: Dugan and Chenoweth (2012)

08/07 Paper Workshop

Read: Come with Questions about Exam 3

08/08 No Class

08/09 Take Home Exam 3 Due