

Global Terrorism

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University of Maryland: University College

Course: GVPT 406
Location: AAFB
Class Time: 19:00 – 22:00 Tuesdays

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Course Description

In the field of Political Science, there are no fewer than six subfields: American Political System, Legalism, Normative Theory, Methodology, International Relations, and Comparative Politics. The two introductory courses gave broad brush strokes over all of these topics. This current course examines one specific aspect of world politics—that dealing with the causes and effects of terrorist activity.

The underlying purpose for this year's course is to train you to be better terrorism researchers and scientific thinkers. If you joined this class thinking it would be a place to sit around and condemn terrorist actions, you are in the wrong place. We are here to understand why they do it and how to keep them from doing it. I am assuming that we do want to keep it from happening. There is a very compelling moral argument that concludes terrorist activities are not immoral and do serve the common good. If you would like to have that discussion, I'll be happy to have it with you outside of class.

The field of terrorism research has grown substantially since the early 1980s, when Martha Crenshaw was forced to publish in a general-purpose journal. Today, two scholarly journals focus almost exclusively on the subject—*Terrorism and Political Violence* and *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*. Both are published by Taylor and Francis. The annual cost is \$643.00 for the former; \$1171.00 for the latter.

Course Text

The required book for this course is the Hoffman book:

Bruce Hoffman (2006). *Inside Terrorism, revised and expanded edition*. Columbia University Press.

In addition to the text, I will assign readings from articles. These additional readings will be available by link on the course's WebTycho site.

Requirements:

In addition to attending every class period, students are expected to deport themselves as professionals. This means that all readings, extensive though they may be, are read and digested; questions about the materials are formulated; and extensions to the topics to be covered are

considered. There are weekly assignments, online participation requirements, class discussion requirements, and a variety of in-class exercises designed to force you to grapple with some of the complexities of terrorism research. There is also a single examination.

In addition...

In addition to the above, you are expected to write as a professional. The grade you earn in the course will be based, in part, on the following unwritten rules, which are assumed by *all* courses at this level. First, all writing must follow the rules of Standard American English. Do ignore the rules of the language. Additionally, all writing must follow academic style. This means there you can use neither contractions nor colloquialisms. Should your paper have too many simple errors, expect me to hand it back without a grade.

As words mean something, and as words have both a denotation and a connotation, you must use definitions relevant to the course, thus general-purpose references are not appropriate.

Cite definitions.

Cite information.

There *is* a class of information known as ‘common knowledge.’ Common knowledge does not need to be cited to avoid plagiarism charges. However, be careful; common knowledge is often *wrong*, as it is often based on incomplete analyses of events, and is often ‘common’ from a non-Political Science standpoint. The rule of thumb is that if the item is important to your argument, you should cite it using at least two *independent* sources. This reduces bias in your information. What is ‘common knowledge’? If the person serving you your Big Mac knows the fact, consider it ‘common knowledge’.

Closely follow the directions provided. If there is an ambiguity caused by the language, ask for clarification. If there is a vagueness in the requirements, that vagueness may be intentional; it allows you the latitude to explore the topic in your own direction. It also allows me to test what you think is important.

Format your paper as described in the course’s style sheet. There is a reason for the style sheet: it trains you to write in a specified format. It also emphasizes that different (sub-) disciplines have different prevailing styles.

If you make an assertion, you need to support it with unassailable logic and unassailable sources. Such sources do not include random people on the street, nor do they include politicians giving their own analysis of the event. Moreover, such sources do not include your parents or your dog (even if it is a Golden Retriever). Such sources, however, *do* include academics who are scholars of the class material and who have published in appropriate academic journals. Such sources are *peer-reviewed*. Newspapers are inherently biased in their analyses of events. Non-peer-reviewed sources have had no one—except the author—edit (and approve) the piece. Sources from non-academic publishers do not have to pass the scrutiny of academic publishers.

As you continue in the discipline, you will discover that certain sources will be better than others. This is a function of the journal editors and the peer-review process. Certain journals, such as *Journal of Politics*, *American Political Science Review*, and *International Organizations*, are of

higher quality because the editors require a higher level of scholarship than do such journals as *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *Politics and Policy*, and *American Journal of International Law*. With respect to university publishers, higher quality research is published by higher quality universities. Thus, a piece from Oxford University Press carries more weight than a piece from Podunk University Press.

In general, I will require neither an upper bound nor a lower bound to assignments. The general rule is to write everything you think you need to write and nothing more. Writing more is not necessarily a good thing, neither is writing less. Consider this a test as well. Your writing tells me what *you* think is important, which is something I grade. Avoid unnecessary words—especially adverbs and adjectives. Do not use metaphors. Do not use colloquialisms. Do not use contractions. Every word in the English language has a reason for existing and has a definite meaning, which includes not only its denotation but its connotation. Think about what you write and the words you choose. Words have power in that they represent meaning to people.

I can only grade what I read.

Realize that there is a difference between *ade*, *aid*, and *aide*; *your*, *yore*, and *you're*; *to*, *too*, and *two*; *its* and *it's*; *apart* and *a part*; *number* and *amount*; *less* and *fewer*; *Soviet* and *Russian*; and *British* and *English*. Get a dictionary of the English language and be best friends with it. Become best buds with Strunk and White.

For those instances where I do require either an upper bound or a lower bound, I am doing so to either force you to stretch and deepen or to edit and prioritize. The bottom line is that you need to trust me as a teacher—I do know what I am doing... at least in the classroom.

Class Policies and Expectations

Taking Notes

Note taking is an essential part of any college course. Not only does the physical act of taking notes reinforce the material in question (it is not merely read and heard, but physically reproduced), it creates a record essential to preparation for quizzes and exams. If you are forced by circumstance to miss class, you are responsible for the information covered that class. Make friends in the class; they will be there for you if you miss a day.

Attendance

Attendance will be checked at the beginning of class. Tardiness counts as absence. If you do not sign in, you will be counted absent. Since participation is a component of your grade, it is very important that you show up for class on time and participate fully. Participation indicates that you have read the assignment, applied it, have grappled with some of the more obvious themes, *and are an active part of the class*. I strongly urge you to come to class with questions on the readings. If, by the end of January, I cannot connect your face and name, you have a problem.

This is *your* class, not mine. I already know the material. Your job is to learn, not to get any specific grade. In all reality, your grade does not necessarily reflect knowledge gained; it reflects

how well you meet the course expectations. When you leave this course, the only thing that really matters is how much you have learned.

Late Assignments

If an assignment is done late, it loses intrinsic value to you. If an assignment is handed in late, it loses all grade value. Assignments are due at the beginning of the class period. You may email your assignments to me, but it will cost you two things: in-depth feedback from me, and 10% of the total value of the assignment. When you hand in a hard copy, make sure it is stapled.

Of course, if I request the assignment be emailed to me in the assignment description, it will be without penalty.

Preparation and Participation

This is college course. You are expected to have not only done the homework and all of the readings, but you are to have thought about the readings and implications. Many classes will revolve around a lecture, many around discussions brought up by you from the readings or from current events, and many around current events that raise interesting questions with respect to the course topic, writ large.

If we do not cover the readings during a class, you are still responsible for them.

Your participation grade is a combination of both attendance and activity during class. Attending class on time increases your attendance grade. This grade is directly related to the number of days you attend class. Your participation grade is directly related to how much you participate in class.

Conduct

At all times, all students are expected to be attentive, to take part in class discussions, and above all else to be courteous and sensitive towards their fellow students. We may deal with emotionally charged subject material with in this course (ethical, religious, political, etc.); such material requires maturity and openness to views which may conflict with one's own. This does not mean that you have to agree with anyone else. It does mean that you must understand their position, their arguments, and their assumptions about life.

This does not mean that any and every view is equally correct. Sometimes, you *will* be wrong.

Writing

Your grade depends upon how well you write. All assignments need to follow the style sheet for this class. All writings reflect you and your ability (thus, plagiarism will be strongly punished). Make sure *you* are satisfied with your finished product. If you hand in hard copies, I will mark them up. This is good, for it gives you feedback with respect to your writing style.

As a side note, there is a fundamental difference between speaking extemporaneously and writing. Writing allows you to edit your words until they truly reflect your intentions. Speaking extemporaneously does not offer such luxuries. Sometimes, you will say things in class that make no sense. (If you do that enough, you might get your own TV show.) The worst thing that I will do in that case is tell you that you are wrong. The world will not end. Flood waters will not rise.

Locusts will not cover the Earth. Speaking in class trains you to think on your feet. However, your grades will come from what you write; it gives a much richer indication of your ability and your knowledge.

Disabilities

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a documented disability, contact the Director of the Office of Disability Accommodations. Also, as soon as is reasonable, inform me of their response.

Cheating, Plagiarism, & Academic Dishonesty

Any instance of cheating, plagiarism, and/or academic dishonesty will at least result in an automatic failure of the course (if not expulsion from the university) and will be dealt with according to those rules outlined in the Student Handbook.

What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is both theft and cheating. It is using the intellectual property (words and/or ideas) or the product of someone else without giving proper credit. This includes (but is not limited to) not citing a quotation, not citing the underlying source of a paraphrase, and not placing quotation marks around a quotation. Such undocumented use of other's words or ideas in any medium of communication (unless such information is recognized as common knowledge) is an extremely serious offense, subject to disciplinary action that will include failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University.

Failure to cite sources of information is serious. Do not do it. In my five years teaching college-level students, I have failed 11 for minor instances of plagiarism and have removed four from the university—all four were seniors. One of the four lost a position at a lobbying firm in DC because of the plagiarism.

Please note that there is no discrepancy between this section and the section above regarding class requirements (the 'unwritten rules'). Many things are 'common knowledge.' Failing to cite such items is not plagiarism. It may be, however, poor style.

Grades

Grades will be posted to the Blackboard website at intervals throughout the semester. The percent grade provided by Blackboard is a ratio of the points you have already earned divided by the total number of points available in the course. It is not a measure of your current points to the current points available.

Your final letter grade will be based on the standard percentage scale: 90/80/70/60, with plusses at the 8s and minuses at the 2s. I do not round. I do not change the grades at the end of the semester—either to your benefit or to your detriment.

You are responsible for tracking your grades and ensuring that what I have posted is correct. If you disagree with a posted value, you have 7 days from the date I hand back the assignment to contest the grade. Beyond that point, no adjustments will be made.

The exception for this rule is the final examination. The grade for the final examination will be made available at least 48 hours prior to when I post your final grades. You have those 48 hours to contest your final examination grade.

Evaluation

Your grade is calculated using the following point values for the following grade entities:

Weekly Assignments:

Weekly summary	10 each week
Weekly questions	10 each week
Weekly answer	20 each week

Online Activities:

Online answer(s)	20 each week
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Examinations:

Final Examination:	100
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Participation:

Activity in class:	50
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Online Activities

Each week, you will have one or more questions to answer on the WebTycho site. You must have those answered online *before* 21:00 on Thursday.

Weekly Assignments

Each week, for the fact-to-face class, there are three written assignments to be turned in to me.

Weekly Summary

The weekly summary is a summary of how the other students answered the online question(s). This needs to be less than two pages in length for the week. Pull in threads of thought. Comment on the similarity (difference) of answers given.

Weekly Questions

You also need to turn in three thoughtful questions each week. These questions are to come from the reading(s). They need to be open ended and deep enough to stimulate discussion during the class. If you succeed, there will be a great discussion for the 180 minutes.

Weekly Answer

Finally, you need to turn in an answer to one of the Weekly Questions you wrote. This needs to be less than three pages in length. It will be graded on depth of thought and correctness. Make sure you cite your sources of information. Failure to cite legitimate sources will result in a failing grade.

Course Outline

The articles can be found on the WebTycho course site.

Week 1: Definitions of terrorism

Readings: Hoffman (2006): Chapter 1

Online Question (Oct 23): 1. Why should we **NOT** study terrorism?

In Class (Oct 28): Definitional issues in terrorism

Week 2: Origins of terrorism

Readings: Crenshaw (1981); Hoffman (2006): Chapter 2

Online Question (Oct 30): 1. Why did Crenshaw emphasize the differences between preconditions and precipitants?
2. How did terrorism speed up the demise of Western empires (empires of the Western powers)? Does this have any application to today?

In Class (Nov 4): Election Day. I hope you voted.
The causes of terrorism

Week 3: Transnational terrorism

Readings: Enders and Sandler (1999); Hoffman (2006): Chapter 3

Online Question (Nov 6): 1. Apply the readings to the communist terror groups of the 1960s and 1970s, like the Red Army Faction and the Red Brigade.

In class (Nov 11): No Class; Veterans' Day.

Week 4: Religion and terrorism

Readings: Sprinzak (2000); Hoffman (2006): Chapter 4

Online Question (Nov 13): 1. Is religion the cause of terrorism or the excuse?

In Class (Nov 18): Immortality

Week 5: Suicide terrorism

Readings: Pape (2003); Hoffman (2006): Chapter 5

Online Question (Nov 20): 1. How is suicide terrorism *not* a violation of the principle of self-preservation?
2. What is 'legitimate' martyrdom?

In Class (Nov 25): Suicide and logic

Week 6: The media and terrorism

Readings: Hoffman (2006): Chapter 6; Hoffman (2006): Chapter 7

Online Question (Nov 27): 1. Curbing the media's freedom would reduce its role in encouraging terrorism. Is this trade-off allowable?

In Class (Dec 2): The role of the media in terrorism

Week 7: Modern terrorism

Readings: Hoffman (2006): Chapter 8; Hoffman (2006): Chapter 9

Online Questions (Dec 4): 1. What are the goals of the War on Terror? Is it achieving these goals?
2. What is the solution to terrorism?

In Class (Dec 9): Past terrorism, modern terrorism, and future terrorism

Week 8: Just War Theory and terrorism

Reading: Crawford (2003)

Online Question (Dec 12): 1. Why is it important to consider the justness of our actions in the War on Terror?
2. What is one thing we know increases the chance of terrorism?

In Class (Dec 16): Just War Theory and justice
Final Examination

End Matter*Changes and Supremacy*

I reserve the right to alter anything on this document. Should it become necessary to change the syllabus, an announcement in class will be made that the new syllabus is posted on the class web site. In the event of a discrepancy between this printed syllabus and the website's syllabus, the website will take precedence.

Class Website

All classroom documents can be found at the classroom website. This website will also contain supplemental documents. Anything posted to the website will be assumed read by every member of the class. Its address is <http://oforsber.kvasaheim.com/courses/gvpt406/>.