PL SC 470: Capstone Seminar: Terrorism, Winter 2012
Department of Political Science, Brigham Young University
12:05-1:20pm        Monday, Wednesday        793 SWKT

1 Contact Information

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Office Hours: M, W 3:30 - 4:30pm
Also available by appointment

2 Course Description and Objectives

Terrorism has been described as “the poor man’s air force” and as a tactic used by states to achieve foreign and domestic policy goals. From this short description of terrorism, you should appreciate the broad nature of the topic which we will engage this semester. Terrorism is a tactic used by individuals, groups, and states for a variety of goals. No single course can give you an understanding of this topic, but in this course I will provide you with a foundation for future analysis of terrorism. Among other topics, we will discuss counterterrorism, terrorist group dynamics, motivations for terrorism, and approaches to studying terrorism. This course is a primer and should be viewed as such. There is enough material on terrorism to fill many semesters of study.

What objectives do I have for the course? I want you to increase your knowledge of terrorism. At a minimum, you should leave this class more informed about terrorism than you were before you took the class. However, your knowledge of terrorism and your ability to contribute to the academic and/or professional field will be greatly increased if you do more than just come to class. My preferred objective is that you leave this class ready to make a contribution. I want you to understand and be able to discuss the causes and consequences of terrorism having examined the research. This may require that you change your previous opinions and/or beliefs. I want you to leave the classroom with an idea of how you could approach answering questions that may arise in the future about terrorism. Summing it all up in a simple sentence, I hope that you learn.

3 Required Texts


All of these texts should be available at the BYU Bookstore. As noted above, they are required. Please notify me as soon as possible if you have trouble obtaining the texts. However, if you decide to forego purchase at the BYU Bookstore and order them through your favorite online retailer, that is fine. However, you will be responsible for securing copies before class discussion. We will also be reading articles from newspapers and journals throughout the semester. I will post the articles on the Blackboard website when they are not available through library resources. I expect that you will read the material assigned before you come to class.

4 Grading Components

1. Syllabus E-mail (-1% if not completed) - The syllabus is long. However, I promise you that I did not make it long just to be mean. I included items here that I felt would be helpful to you. Why read it? Some things you just have to do. This is one of them. I want you to send me an e-mail by Monday, January 9, indicating that you have read the syllabus from start to finish. If you do not, I will mark your final grade down by 1%.

2. Terrorism Data Assignment (5%) - In this assignment, you will each be assigned a dataset or source related to terrorism. Your job will be to write a single spaced page that summarizes what the data is about, what it contains, and identify a couple of questions related to terrorism that the data could help us answer. This will require that you do some digging into the dataset. This assignment must be e-mailed to me by 5:00pm on January 18th.

3. Discussion Leadership (5%) - Each student will have at least one opportunity to help lead the class discussion (the actual number of times each student will lead the discussion depends on the number of students enrolled in the course). Leading discussion entails more than just asking a general question. Discussion leaders should have read the assigned reading a few times through, highlighting questions (not statements) that will increase our substantive, theoretical, and/or methodological understanding of the study of terrorism. I will be present to guide the discussion if it is needed (i.e. to get it going or bring it back if it strays), but the students responsibility for leading the discussion will be graded on the quality of their questions and guidance of the discussion.

4. Response Memos (5%) - Of course, discussion leadership will mean little if the rest of the class is not prepared. To encourage the students that are not leading the discussion to come to class prepared, I will require 5 response memos of each student throughout the semester. These will be given a grade of A, B, or C. I will include very brief written comments if I feel that such would be helpful to you. You may choose which 5 class topics you will write a memo on, but you must turn in a hard-copy of your response memo at the beginning of class to receive credit.

5. Participation (5%) - I will keep track of in class participation. My definition of participation includes both negative and positive contributions. Negative contributions include unscholarly comments towards others (see classroom conduct below), talking while others
are talking, etc. Positive contributions include asking good questions, making helpful comments, etc.

6. Peer Review (10%) - It almost goes without saying that peer review at the heart of the scientific study of anything. However, you should not be so closed-minded as to assume that peer review only helps “scientific” work. In any career you undertake, giving and receiving feedback will make your enterprise, paper, presentation, or product better. The peer reviews will be due a couple of days after the paper you are reviewing is presented. More will be forthcoming on the peer review process.

7. Capstone Paper (70% total, broken down below) - This paper is designed to be the pinnacle of your undergraduate career. That statement alone should indicate the importance I give to this assignment. As such, I have designed a multi-part process that should help you (or, if needed) force you to complete this project with flying colors.

   • Topic Statement Submission (1%) - It is really hard to write a good project without having a good topic. That is why I am requiring you (early in the semester) to decide what your research in this class is going to address. Given the topic of this seminar, it should be related to terrorism. Other than that, I am flexible. To successfully complete this requirement, you will need to address the following items: what is your research question? What are two relevant works that deal with your question? What methodological approach do you plan to use to answer your question? This document should be no longer than a page in length. It will be due in class on February 6.

   • Prospectus (4%) - A prospectus is a written summary of the direction of your research that should accomplish two things. (1) It should give you a good idea of where you are going, whether or not you have a workable topic, and what the literature has to say on your subject. To write a good prospectus, you should conduct a fair amount of research on your topic (which will be more specific than just “terrorism.”) (2) It will give the reader (in this case, me) a good idea of whether or not your project is moving in the right direction. It does not have to be terribly lengthy, but should be at least 2 single spaced pages.

   • Rough Draft (5%) - This is a rough, 15-20 page version of your paper. It should include citations, appropriate formatting, etc. I will return this paper with a few comments. It will not, however, be graded on substance. It will be graded on completeness. I expect this paper to have all the necessary sections of a paper, not to be an outline or have sections uncompleted. It will be due on March 9 at 4:45pm in 745 SWKT.

   • Polished Draft (10%) - This is a more completed version of the your rough draft. It is the draft that both I and your peer reviewers will offer comments on. It should form the basis for your oral presentation. This draft will be graded on substance, formatting, and structure. If it is not fully completed, the grade on this portion of the assignment will suffer. This paper will be due a couple of days before you present.

   • Oral Presentation (10%) - Having good ideas is only part of the battle. Conveying those ideas through both the written and spoken word is also very important. This component is designed to give you practice in conveying your ideas orally. Presenters will be graded on length, clarity, and responses to questions raised during the presentation.
• Final Paper (40%) - This is it. Having received comments from fellow students and the instructor, you need to put it all together into a final paper. The final paper should reflect the highest level of your capability. Since the question will arise, it should be at least 20 pages in length. But please do not confuse length with quality. Making your paper 20 pages in length only assures that it will be graded, not that you will receive a passing grade. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the capstone course grading policy outlined below. The final draft is due December 11 at 4:45pm in 745 SWKT.

5 Course Policies

5.1 Grading Scale

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>94-100</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-69</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90-93</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59 &amp; below</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.2 An Important Note on Attendance

I want you to pay special attention to the fact that I do not require attendance. Coming to class is a choice that should be governed by your preferences. If you prefer to come to class over hitting the slopes, come to class. If you prefer the slopes, don’t forget to grab your ski pass on the way out. Of course, the better informed your preferences are, the more capable you are to make good decisions regarding what actions you will take. You cannot participate without being present.

5.3 Capstone Grading Policy

It is important that you recognize that the key component of this course is your capstone paper. Per department policy, you must receive a grade of at least a C- in order to have the capstone course count towards the political science major. If your course grade is about a C-, but your paper is below this standard, the course will not count towards the major requirement. If you fall below this standard or do not complete your paper by the end of the semester, you will be assigned a T grade, which will remain as such until you complete a passing paper.

5.4 Make-up Work Policy

Unexcused absences for individual or group exercises and tests cannot be made up. If you notify me prior to the absence and provide documentation, make-up may be considered. Documentation must show an unavoidable reason you cannot be in class (vacation, trips, weddings, etc. do not qualify as unavoidable). Notifying me after an assignment (save for a documented medical emergency) is not acceptable.
5.5 Classroom Conduct

The classroom is a place of learning and exploration of ideas. The amount of learning we take away from the classroom each day will depend on the individual contribution we make to the classroom atmosphere. In that sense, learning is defined both by what we bring into the classroom and by how we act once we are in the classroom. We will be challenged by new ideas and viewpoints that differ from our own. During this exchange of ideas, it is improper to malign or treat your classmates as stupid based on their statements, political views, appearance, or any other characteristics.\footnote{If you have a reason to disagree with a classmate, “You must be dumb if you believe that” or “I maybe thought that in the third grade” would not be good ways to express your disagreement. Rolling eyes, loud sighs, and other such actions are likewise inappropriate.} I expect the same courtesy shown towards me. I reserve the right to lower your participation grade if you choose to conduct yourself in an improper manner (i.e. yelling, swearing, threats, etc.).

5.6 Syllabus Change Policy

The syllabus and schedule are subject to change. I may add/remove readings as we get closer to an assigned topic. I will give prior notification via Blackboard and, when possible, in-class.

5.7 Academic Honor Policy

Academic dishonesty is a serious academic offense indeed. Specific examples of academic dishonesty include cheating on exams or plagiarism. Without diminishing the academic seriousness of the offense, I wish to convey to you that the academic seriousness is far less important to me than the impact that such offenses have on your character and good name. Academic penalties for academic dishonesty can result in your expulsion from the university. Whether or not such a penalty is the result, the personal consequences of academic dishonesty are much higher. Do all that you can to avoid having to deal with either academic or personal consequences by taking appropriate preparatory actions.

Often, violations of academic honor come about because of poor planning, laziness, lack of knowledge, or something else that is within your control. I hold you completely responsible for educating yourself regarding plagiarism. Assure that everything you write is your own original work. In instances where you need to reference other works to support your ideas, cite them. If you use someone else’s data, cite them. If you are uncertain whether or not something needs to be cited, cite it and ask me later about it.\footnote{Details about Academic Honesty (and more detailed descriptions of plagiarism) are found at http://saas.byu.edu/catalog/2010-2011ucat/GeneralInfo/HonorCode.php.}

5.8 Discrimination

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits sex discrimination against any participant in an educational program or activity that receives federal funds. The act is intended
to eliminate sex discrimination in education. Title IX covers discrimination in programs, admissions, activities, and student-to-student sexual harassment. BYU’s policy against sexual harassment extends not only to employees of the university but to students as well. If you encounter unlawful sexual harassment or gender based discrimination, please talk to your professor; contact the Equal Employment Opportunities Office at 422-5895 or 367-5689 (24-hours); or contact the Honor Code Office at 422-2847.

5.9 Students with Disabilities

Brigham Young University is committed to providing a working and learning atmosphere which reasonably accommodates qualified persons with disabilities. If you have any disability which may impair your ability to complete this course successfully, please contact the University Accessibility Center (422-2767). Reasonable academic accommodations are reviewed for all students who have qualified documented disabilities. Services are coordinated with the student and instructor by the UAC office. If you need assistance or if you feel you have been unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of disability, you may seek resolution through established grievance policy and procedures. You should contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at 422-5895, D-282 ASB.

6 Course Schedule

Note: Any readings not in the textbooks or easily available online will be available online (don’t hesitate to e-mail me if you can’t find a reading).

Week 1

Wednesday, January 4 What Are We Doing Here?


Week 2

Monday, January 9 The Study of Terrorism: Data, Challenges, Promise

- Sageman, Chapter 1

• Syllabus E-mail Due

Wednesday, January 11 Brief History of Terrorism


Week 3
Monday, January 16 No Class - Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday

• No Assigned Reading

Wednesday, January 18 Thinking About Writing


• “Writing Suggestions and Guidance” - class handout

• Terrorism Data Project Due

Week 4
Monday, January 23 Different Groups That Use Terrorism


**Wednesday, January 25** The Evolution of the Jihadi Threat


**Week 5**

**Monday, January 30** Research on Group Dynamics


**Wednesday, February 1** Thinking Dyadically About Terrorism


• Findley, Michael, James Piazza, and Joseph Young. Forthcoming. “Games Rivals Play: Terrorism in International Rivalries.” *Journal of Politics*.

**Week 6**

**Monday, February 6** Paper Roundtable
• Written Topic State Due In Class

Wednesday, February 8 Terrorism and the Internet


• Hoffman, Bruce. 2007. *Inside Terrorism.* Chapter 7.

Week 7

Monday, February 13 Media and Terrorism, Part I

• Nacos, Chapters 1-3

Wednesday, February 15 Media and Terrorism, Part II

• Nacos, Chapters 5-8

Week 8

Monday, February 20 No Class - President’s Day Holiday

• No assigned reading

Tuesday, February 21 Mass Impact of Terrorism


Wednesday, February 22 Suicide Terrorism


• Hoffman, Bruce. 2007. *Inside Terrorism*. Chapter 5.

**Week 9**

**Monday, February 27** State-Sponsored Terrorism


**Wednesday, February 29** Counterterrorism


**Week 10**

**Monday, March 5** Individual Paper Meetings

• TBA

**Wednesday, March 7** Individual Paper Meetings

• TBA
Friday, March 9 Rough Draft Due

- Turn in your rough draft to 745 SWKT by 4:45pm

Week 11
Monday, March 12 Oral Presentations #1

- TBA

Wednesday, March 14 Oral Presentations #2

- TBA

Week 12
Monday, March 19 Oral Presentations #3

- TBA

Wednesday, March 21 Oral Presentations #4

- TBA

Week 13
Monday, March 26 Oral Presentations #5

- TBA

Wednesday, March 28 Oral Presentations #6

- TBA

Week 14
Monday, April 2 Individual Paper Meetings
• TBA

Monday, April 4 Individual Paper Meetings

• TBA

Week 15

Monday, April 9 Terrorism Moving Forward

• TBA

Wednesday, April 11 No class

• Work on the final draft of your papers, which is due at 4:45pm. Schedule appointments to see me as necessary.

7 Recommended Readings

You could spend a lot of time reading about terrorism. Here are some places to start.

Studying Terrorism


Terrorism & Regime Type


Suicide Terrorism


Economics & Terrorism


Terrorist Groups

**Al-Qaeda**


**Boko Haram**

Terrorism & Networks


Counterterrorism

- Enders and Sandler, Chapter 4

Terrorism and the Media

- Hoffman, Chapter 6

Terrorism and the United States


Terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction

Terrorism Review Articles

