CEHC 299: ISIS and the Evolution of Terrorism?
Fall 2016
Thursdays, 2:45pm – 5:35pm
LC 20

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518-442-5782
bbehlendorf@albany.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 1:30pm-2:30pm
Humanities B-16
Or by appointment

Course Summary
The purpose of this course is to understand and critically assess the recent entrance of the terrorist and insurgent group known as the Islamic State. Making waves across the world with their brutality, reach, and capabilities for carrying out attacks globally, the Islamic State purportedly represents an innovative shift in the threat from terrorism. In reality, the Islamic State is an evolution of various organizations and entities, and the tactics they utilize may not be so revolutionary when viewed across the history of terrorism. Through this course, students will be presented with an introduction to the particular group, including their ideology and operations. In addition, students will also evaluate the group’s operations across several different themes which may or may not prove to be revolutionary in their use. Finally, students will understand various approaches that have been taken to counter or disrupt operations by the Islamic State. Ultimately, the students will themselves assess whether the Islamic State is truly innovative, and propose their own innovations to address the threat from this organization.

Course Objectives
- Comprehensively understand the historical, social, religious, and political context of the Islamic State and their current operations;
- Assess their various operational themes in light of historical trends and patterns of tactical decision-making by previous terrorist and insurgent organizations;
- Identify and critique existing strategies for countering the operational dynamics of the Islamic State;
- Critically assess and defend whether the Islamic State is an evolution or revolution in terrorism; and,
- Pose their own defensible strategy to counter some facet of the Islamic State.

Course Readings
In this course, will have two primary sets of readings accomplish. First, it will be weekly readings provided and topics that students must complete prior to his reading the current knowledge on Islamic state, and they may be modified as new research and/or policy pieces are released.

In addition, you will be required to read of one the following books for a more comprehensive understanding of the Islamic state. These books will factor into several assignments over the course of the semester, but it is your choice which one you would like to read:


**Course Parameters:**

*Attendance and Participation:* Regular attendance is also imperative. I understand that circumstances sometimes necessitate absences. Students missing class due to illness or personal/family emergencies will be excused provided the absence is documented. Students missing class for religious observance will also be excused, provided that they notify me in advance of the absence. Students who miss class will be responsible for getting notes from classmates.

*Content Advisory:* Students are advised that the content of this course may not be appropriate for everyone. Topics that will be discussed include repeated sexual assault, the ways that traffickers degrade and intimidate victims in order to better control them, and extreme physical violence against women and children generally. In addition, disturbing videos will be used to illustrate human trafficking practices in ways that cannot be adequately understood just by listening to a lecture or reviewing the related PowerPoint slides. All registered students are encouraged to read the syllabus thoroughly at the beginning of the semester in order to make an informed decision about whether or not they want to remain in the course.

Students are invited to speak privately with the instructor if they become especially uncomfortable with a specific theme or module. All university students can also speak confidentially with a professional counselor at no charge ([http://www.albany.edu/counseling_center/services.shtml](http://www.albany.edu/counseling_center/services.shtml)).

*Learning Disabilities:* Students with learning disabilities must notify the instructor within the first two weeks of the course in order to make suitable arrangements.

**Course Websites**

Required readings will be posted on a Blackboard page which can be accessed at:

[https://blackboard.albany.edu/](https://blackboard.albany.edu/)

**E-mail Contact**

All students are **required** to update the Blackboard preferences with an email address that redirects all course email to their primary email account. This will ensure that they get all emails from the instructor and group members in a timely fashion. This must be done by the end of the first week of class.

**Plagiarism and Cheating**
The emergence of the internet has changed our world forever. The amount of information at our fingertips has increased geometrically over the last decade. Library searches which took hours to complete in the past can be done in a matter of minutes today. Public and private documents that were difficult, if not impossible, to gain access to in the past are now a mouse click away. While this technological revolution has enhanced the learning process in many ways, it has also increased the amount of plagiarism. Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional use of another’s words or ideas without giving credit to that person. While this includes copying text word for word without the use of quotation marks, it also includes paraphrasing another person’s work without proper citation. Intellectual honesty is a core value of university and the foundation of faculty and student development. Plagiarism, therefore, undermines the entire university community.

In the past couple of years, a number of students have been caught plagiarizing from internet sources. The punishments have ranged from failing the assignment to failing the course to suspension from the university. This has been a painful and time consuming experience for everyone involved. In order to eliminate this problem, all students will be required to submit their written assignments electronically via the Blackboard website prior to handing in hard copies at the start of class. All paper submissions will be checked for plagiarism using the Turnitin software program (or a similar program). Your written assignments will also be placed in a database with past submissions. This database will also be searched for plagiarized material. Students guilty of plagiarizing any material will receive a failing grade for the course and the evidence will be automatically turned over to the Office of Conflict Resolution and Civic Responsibility (i.e., judicial affairs).

Course Requirements:

Course Requirements
Grades will be assigned as follows:

10% Participation
30% Reflection Assignments (3)
25% Individual Innovation Analysis
35% Innovation Proposal/Presentation

Participation
Earning a good participation grade will require much more than just showing up to class. It includes active and thoughtful participation in discussions in class. Your ability to participate in an informed way is dependent on a thorough reading of the course material. Although large, the class is taught in a Socratic manner which encourages participation from a broad range of students in the class.

Reflection papers
During the course of the class, you will be required to complete three short reflection papers related to the readings in the course. These reflection papers will require the student to critically reflect on the assigned readings and the author’s arguments. A prompt for each reflection paper will be given at the end of class one week (and subsequently posted on Blackboard). The reflection paper are due by 2:00pm the following Thursday to be electronically submitted via the course Blackboard site. The intended audience of the reflection paper will be professional analysts within the Intelligence Community, and a guide to help you write the reflection assignments will be provided alongside the first prompt. Successful reflection papers
will do more than summarize the relevant readings. Rather, they will relate them to other readings or research efforts and approach them critically. **No late reflection papers will be accepted.**

**Individual Innovation Analysis**

As an individual-level assignment, each student in the course will be required to write an analysis specific to one of the six innovations in the course (State or Non-State; Foreign Fighters; Social Media; Women and Children; Cyber Capabilities; or (G)Local Terrorism & Lone Wolves) addressing the following question:

*Are the actions of ISIS in [select specific area] innovative (doing something new) or evolutionary (slightly altering what others have done)?*

The purpose of the assignment is for students to critically situate the actions and strategies of ISIS in a specific domain with the trend of terrorist/insurgent activities which have preceded. Each paper will have to justify their assessment using evidence from readings both drawn from the course as well as outside readings, with at least 10 sources cited. Citations will be in APA format, and the paper will be between 5-7 double-spaced pages in length. It is important to note that regurgitation of material presented in the course will not be viewed as sufficient for this assignment; the emphasis is to assess and analyze whether they are innovative or evolutionary and draw your own conclusions, well-supported with evidence.

**Countering ISIS Innovation Final Project**

Focusing the course on innovations in tactics and strategies that ISIS may or may not be leading, as a final component of this course, students will propose their own “innovations” to counter one or more aspects of ISIS operations/capabilities/influence. For example, students may propose:

- New social media campaign to target individuals who are thinking about joining ISIS;
- Increased monitoring of black market oil sales to prevent ISIS smuggling;
- Pattern analysis of ISIS website code to determine unique authorship and capabilities of ISIS Cyber Caliphate; or,
- Educational program targeting women to prevent flight to Syria to become “ISIS Brides.”

The proposed effort must be directly tied to a specific operational, strategic, or tactical aspect that ISIS currently engages. In addition, students will be provided with a “budget” of resources that their proposed effort has to fall within, in order to mimic the difficult challenges of countering ISIS given resource constraints facing governments and civil society. More importantly, the proposed innovation **must be something that is not already being done to counter ISIS by either governments or civil society.** The proposed items above are all being done to address ISIS, and therefore are not available to students. The purpose is to think creatively about how ISIS could be countered.

Students are allowed to work as individuals or groups (up to 3 in a group): it is your choice. Requirements will be same regardless of individual or group work, although groups will be required to complete an additional sheet outlining which group member worked on which item in the final project. Grading of the proposed project will include both an instructor grade as well as blind peer grading by another group/individual.

The final assignment will consist of three parts:

- Presentation of your proposed innovation (poster, video or PowerPoint)
- 1 page brief/factsheet on the proposed effort, written for a broad audience
- 10 page paper justifying (with citations, evidence, etc) how your innovation addresses the specific challenge posed by ISIS in that area and doesn’t duplicate what is already being done.
All components of the final assignment will be due two-hours before the final exam slot for the class, and the final presentation will be given during a Counterterrorism Innovation Showcase that will occur during the final exam slot. Outside members of the CEHC faculty, other students, and interested practitioners will also be invited to the showcase; therefore, the presentations should be professional in both attire and delivery.

**Course Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading Due Before Class</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/1</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
<td>None</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ISIS: A Deep Dive</strong></td>
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<td>9/8</td>
<td>Origins and Key Leadership</td>
<td>Byman - Understanding the Islamic State&lt;br&gt;McCants – The Believer</td>
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<tr>
<td>9/15</td>
<td>Organizational Dynamics</td>
<td>Continue reading selected book</td>
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<td>9/22</td>
<td>Ideology and Intro to Terrorist Innovation</td>
<td>Complete selected book&lt;br&gt;McCants – Chapter 5&lt;br&gt;Gill et al. – Malevolent Creativity</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; Reflection Paper Due</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>“Innovations” of ISIS</strong></td>
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<td>9/29</td>
<td>State or Non-State?</td>
<td>Weiss and Hassan, Chapter 14&lt;br&gt;Raghavan – *Brutal but Bureaucratic&lt;br&gt;Anderson – *ISIS: State or Terror Group&lt;br&gt;Flanigan – *Nonprofit Social Provision</td>
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<td>10/6</td>
<td>Foreign Fighters</td>
<td>*The Caliphate’s Global Workforce&lt;br&gt;Malet – *Why Foreign Fighters&lt;br&gt;Hegghammer – *Should I Stay or Should I go</td>
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<td>10/13</td>
<td>Social Media</td>
<td>Stern and Berger, Chapters 6 and 7&lt;br&gt;*How to attack the Islamic State Online&lt;br&gt;Gilsinan – *Why ISIS Power on Social Media is Overrated&lt;br&gt;Wilkinson - *The Media and Terrorism</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; Reflection Paper Due</td>
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<td>10/20</td>
<td>Women and Children</td>
<td>Horgan et al - *From Cubs to Lions&lt;br&gt;Bloom – *Female Suicide Bombers&lt;br&gt;Jaffer - *The Secret World of ISIS Brides</td>
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<td>10/27</td>
<td>Cyber Capabilities</td>
<td>Nussbaum - *Thinking about ISIS and its Cyber Capabilities&lt;br&gt;Sigholm – *Nonstate Actors in Cyberspace Operations&lt;br&gt;Katz - *When ISIS calls you out by name</td>
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<td>11/3</td>
<td>(G)Local Terrorism &amp; Inspiration</td>
<td>Atran – *The Durability of Chaos&lt;br&gt;Marrett – *Al-Qaeda in Islamic Maghreb: A “Glocal” Organization&lt;br&gt;*ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa&lt;br&gt;Wallace-Wells - *Small Scale Attacks are the New Normal</td>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; Reflection Paper Due</td>
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<td>11/10</td>
<td>Counterterrorism</td>
<td>• <em>Defeating the Islamic State: A Bottom-Up Approach</em></td>
<td>Innovation Analysis Due</td>
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<td>• Cronin – <em>ISIS is not a Terrorist Group</em></td>
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<td>11/17</td>
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<td>No Class (Instructor at Conference)</td>
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<td>11/24</td>
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<td>No Class (Thanksgiving)</td>
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<td>12/1</td>
<td>Countering Violent Extremism</td>
<td>• Carter Center – <em>Countering Daesh Recruitment Propaganda</em></td>
<td>Draft 1-page Project Brief Due</td>
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<td>• Atran – <em>Social Science on CVE</em></td>
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<td>• Vidino &amp; Hughes – <em>CVE in the United States</em></td>
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<td>• Aly et al - <em>Rethinking countering violent extremism: implementing the role of civil society</em></td>
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<td>12/8</td>
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<td>No Class: Individual/Group Meetings with Professor (must be completed)</td>
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<td>TBD</td>
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<td>Counterterrorism Innovation Showcase / Final Projects Due</td>
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