RPOS 554: Political Violence: Terrorism and Insurgency

Professor: Bryan R. Early
Class Times: Wednesdays 5:45 – 8:35 PM
Email: bearly@albany.edu
Office Hours: Uptown – M 12:30-2:00
Downtown, Milne 300A – W 1:00-2:00 PM

Course Description

This course will provide an overview of a wide range of topics dealing with why political violence is used, the forms it takes, the parties that propagate it, and how its targets’ respond to it. The course topics will cover rebellion, revolution, civil wars, and terrorism, though the majority of the class will focus on terrorism. Students will gain insight into why terrorism constitutes a distinct form of political violence and review the leading research on its causes and consequences. The course readings will provide students with foundational knowledge of the field that can be applied to their individual research projects. Students will be strongly encouraged to choose a research project that they have an interest in developing as a working paper that could be submitted to a conference or for publication. A class peer review exercise will serve as the culmination of the class.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Be familiar with the leading authors and arguments that do work in the field of political violence
2. Have experience conducting research on the subject matter using an appropriate social scientific or analytical methodology
3. Have developed an original contribution to the research on this subject matter
4. Be capable of pursuing the publication of their research paper in an academic or policy outlet

Required Texts:


**Grading**

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their contributions to seminar discussions, their performance in leading a class seminar, the independent research they conduct as part of the class, and the peer reviews they conduct of their classmates’ research. The percentage breakdown and description of the assignments are as follows:

**Class Participation:** 25%

Each student is expected to keep up with the assigned readings and to come to class prepared to make substantively valuable contributions to class discussions. Both the quality and quantity of students’ participation will be taken into account. Students will be asked to conduct a self-evaluation at the end of the semester.

**Leading a Seminar:** 15%

Every student will be responsible for leading a seminar at least one time during the semester. The student(s) responsible for a seminar will provide their classmates with a summary outline of the week’s readings and a set of questions to guide the seminar discussion. They will use this guide in directing the week’s seminar.

**Policy / Research Paper:** 40%

Each student will be responsible for conducting an original piece of academic or policy-relevant research. These projects should focus on a topic related to revolution, civil war, insurgency, terrorism, or governmental responses to them. Students’ final research papers should be no longer than 12,000 words, including references and notes.

- *Research topic due on or before 10/5*
- Literature review and theory sections / Policy background sections
due 11/4
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Completed Final Drafts Due 11/23

**Peer Review Assignment:** 20%

Each student will conduct two peer reviews of their colleagues’ research papers as if they were reviewing them for publication (if the project is a research paper) or as member of the National Security Council (if the project is a whitepaper). The reviews will be single-blind, as the reviewers’ identities will remain anonymous to the author. These reviews will be evaluated on their thoroughness, the constructive comments they provide, and the objective evaluation they make about the quality of the research. The reviews should each be roughly 2-3 pages in length. *Due on 12/2.*

**Policy on Academic Honesty**

Please familiarize yourself with the undergraduate bulletin’s descriptions of plagiarism. The university’s official policy can be found at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html). If you are involved in plagiarism, the penalty will be failure in the course and you will be reported to judicial affairs. If you are not sure if something violates standards – feel free to ask ahead of time. In general, it’s always better to err on the side of citing too much than too little in your research papers. Lastly, never cite Wikipedia.

**Accommodations**

“Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with documented physical, sensory, systemic, cognitive, learning and psychiatric disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring accommodation in this class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (Campus Center 137, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.” See the official policy at: [http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html](http://www.albany.edu/studentlife/dss/Accommodation.html). If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please also inform the instructor as soon as possible.

**Research Resources**

**Recommended Resources on Research Design:**


**Quantitative Data Sources:**

International Terrorism: Attributes of Terrorist Events (ITERATE) Project. Data accessed by subscription or partially available through the ICPSR.

Global Terrorism Database (GTD). National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and the Response to Terrorism. Data is freely available. Available at: [http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data/](http://www.start.umd.edu/start/data/)

Monterey WMD Terrorism Database. Data accessed by permission. Available at: [http://cns.miis.edu/wmdt/](http://cns.miis.edu/wmdt/).

Data on Armed Conflict. Center for the Study of Civil War, PRIO. Data is freely available. Available at: [http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/](http://www.prio.no/CSCW/Datasets/Armed-Conflict/).

Paul Hensel’s Webpage. Freely available data on a variety of topics related to IR, IPE, conflict, and geography. Available at: [http://www.paulhensel.org/data.html](http://www.paulhensel.org/data.html).

Correlates of War. Freely available data on a variety of topics related to IR, and IPE, conflict. Available at: [http://www.correlatesofwar.org/](http://www.correlatesofwar.org/).
Course Schedule

Week 1 (9/1): Introduction

Week 2 (9/9): Rebellion and Revolution


Recommended:


Theda Skocpol. 1979. States and Social Revolutions. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


Week 3 (9/16): The Use of Domestic Political Violence


Week 4 (9/23): Civil Wars


Week 5 (9/30): Terrorism


*Recommended:*


Week 6 (10/7): Explanations of Terrorism


*Recommended:*


Week 7 (10/14): The Occurrence of Terrorism


**Week 8 (10/21): Terrorist Networks, Organizations, and Recruitment**


**Recommended:**


**Week 9 (10/28): State Sponsorship and Repression of Political Violence**


**Recommended:**

Week 10 (11/4): Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism

**Special Guest Lecturer**


Recommended:


Week 11 (11/11): The Study of CBRN Terrorism

**Instructor Presentation: The Art of the Introduction**


Recommended:


**Week 12 (11/18): The Study of Suicide Terrorism**

**Instructor Presentation: Submitting Your Paper for Publication**


*Recommended:*


**No Class (11/25)**

**Week 14 (12/2): Conclusion and Voluntary Presentations**

**Instructor Presentation: What to do with an R&R**