RPOS/RPAD 554: Political Violence, Terrorism, and Insurgency

Professor: Bryan R. Early
Class Times: Wednesdays, 5:45 – 8:35 PM
Room: Husted, 013
Email: bearly@albany.edu
Office Hours: Milne 300A – Mondays, 10-11AM

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, those that use it, and how its targets’ respond to it. The course will address revolution, civil war, insurgency, and terrorism, though the majority of the class will focus on terrorism. Students will gain particular insight into why terrorism constitutes a distinct form of political violence and review the leading research on its causes and consequences. The class will also explore governmental policy responses to terrorism and insurgency.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students should:

1. Be familiar with the leading authors and arguments in the field of political violence
2. Be able to distinguish between varying types of domestic political violence
3. Understand what leads to the use of political violence, the various forms it takes, and what its consequences can be

Required Texts:


Grading

Students will be evaluated on the basis of their contributions to seminar discussions, the quality of their reading summaries and discussion questions, and their performance on in-class quizzes and exams. The percentage breakdown and description of the assignments are as follows:
Class Participation: 10%

Each student is expected to attend class prepared to make substantively valuable contributions to class discussions. Both the quality and quantity of students’ participation will be taken into account. Participation grades will be penalized for unexcused absences.

Reading Summary and Discussion Questions: 10%

Every student will collaborate in producing an analytical summary of the week’s readings and a set of discussion questions at least once during the semester.

Quizzes: 25%

Five quizzes and/or group activities on the assigned weekly readings will be given throughout the semester, each counting for 5% of a student’s total grade. As a rule, these quizzes/activities cannot be made up.

Midterm: 25%

An in-class, open-book midterm examination will be given during the middle of the semester. It will test students’ conceptual knowledge of the subject matter and understanding of the key explanations of political violence.

Final Exam: 30%

An in-class, closed-book final examination will be given at the end of the course during the scheduled exam period. This exam will be comprehensive.

Policy on Academic Honesty

I have no tolerance for academic dishonesty. Any student found cheating or engaging in plagiarism will receive a zero on the assignment in which the violation occurred, and, depending upon the severity of the incident, I reserve the right to fail violators for the entire course. I will also report the incident to the university administration. The University’s official policy can be found at: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/2003-2004/regulations.html.

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>. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course please also inform the instructor as soon as possible.
Course Schedule

Week 1 (8-28): Introduction


Week 2 (9-4): No Class

Week 3 (9-11): Motivations for Rebellion


Week 4 (9-18): Revolutions


Week 5 (9-25): Civil Wars


Week 6 (10-2): Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency


**Week 7 (10-9): Rebel Groups and Political Violence**


**Week 8 (10-16): Terrorism and Foreign Fighters**


**Week 9 (10-23): Midterm**

**Week 10 (10-30): The Causes of Terrorism**


**Week 11 (11-6): Strategy, Lethality, and Networks in the Use of Terrorism**


**Week 12 (11-13): CBRN Terrorism**


**Week 13 (11-20): State-Sponsored Terrorism**


**Week 14 (11/27): No Class**

**Week 15 (12-4): U.S. National Security, Counter-Insurgency, and Counter-Terrorism**


