CRIMINAL GROUPS – INTERNATIONAL SECURITY THREATS IN A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy

Political Science RPOS 399-9343
Spring Semester 2017
Monday and Wednesday, 5:45 PM – 7:05 PM, HU 129

Professor: Irina A. Chindea
Email: Ichindea@albany.edu
Office: Milne 121A
Office Hours: take place in the Contact Office (Humanities B-16)
Monday: 12:00 PM – 2:00 PM

Course Description: In today's globalized environment, criminal groups undermine the ability of state institutions to govern in countries all over the world, irrespective of the political regime in place. The threats they pose go beyond simple, local law-and-order concerns. In this context, this course surveys the ways in which criminal organizations have an impact on domestic, regional and international security. The course discusses the connections between the evolution over time in the structure of criminal organizations (e.g., hierarchies vs networks), the scope of their illicit activities as well as their ties with the state and other violent non-state actors. The course also aims to further the debate on the place of violent non-state actors in the international system, and the ways in which the field of international relations theory can be adapted in response to this real-world challenge.

Expectations: This is a reading intensive course, and students are expected to attend every class having read and prepared to discuss the assigned texts. Attendance of lectures is mandatory. All students are expected to turn in the assigned work on time. Late submissions will incur a penalty of 1/3 grade point per day.

The goals of the course:

1. To have the students learn to differentiate among types of violent non-state actors (i.e., insurgents, terrorists, militias, warlords, criminal organizations) and go beyond the basic classification in actors with political goals versus actors with financial goals. This distinction is important in an increasingly global context in which violent non-state actors morph from one type into another. These “identity mutations” create confusion among government officials who are increasingly challenged in their efforts to respond timely and adequately to the threats posed by non-state armed groups.

2. To introduce the students to the diverse organizational structures criminal groups embrace (i.e., hierarchy versus network), the main illicit activities they undertake (e.g., trafficking in arms, drugs and humans; money laundering) and the impact these activities have on domestic and regional stability. In addition, the course will discuss the circumstances in which criminal groups engage in threatened or actual violence to achieve their goals as opposed to engaging in the use of corruption of state officials.
3. To present the various relationships in which criminal groups engage the state and other non-state armed groups, as well as the ways in which states engage the criminal groups to further their own national security agendas.

**Course Requirements:** There are five requirements for this class.

a. **Attendance and active participation** will count 15% towards your final grade. Lecture attendance is mandatory.

b. **Two in-class quizzes,** each worth 5% of your grade. The quizzes will be given at the beginning of the class on **February 8th, and April 12th.** Quizzes will be made up of short answer questions or multiple choice questions, and, occasionally, short essay questions. Each quiz will be about 30 minutes, and you should plan your answers accordingly. Please note that the quizzes will focus on whether you are reading and coming to lecture – i.e. it will test whether you are taking notes, and remembering the facts and theories from the material covered in readings or lectures.

c. **Take-home mid-term exam:** 25%. The midterm exam will cover the first half of the course. The test will cover the material in the books, and the material in lectures. The exam will be distributed 24 hours in advance prior to its due date and time: 7:00PM on **Wednesday, March 8th.** All students are expected to submit their exam through Blackboard. You may email me a back-up copy within the deadline specified above. If you do not submit your exam on time nor email me the back-up copy prior to 7:00PM on 3/8, your assignment will be considered to be **late.** The mid-term exam will consist of two essays. More details on the points that you are expected to cover in both essays will be provided to you in advance.

d. **Research Paper:** 25%. You are required to write a 10 to maximum 15-page paper (double spaced Times New Roman 12 font with 1 inch margins) on a topic of your choice related to the content of this class. You are expected to consult with me about the topic chosen before proceeding with writing the paper to make sure that you are on the right track. The paper aims to encourage you to think creatively about the ways in which a real world problem can be approached from either an international relations/comparative politics theory or policy-making perspective. The paper will be due on **April 5th,** at the end of class in hard copy. An electronic copy should also be emailed to me and uploaded on Blackboard by the end of class on that same day, April 5th. I encourage you to come to my office hours to discuss your ideas. A handout with details regarding the structure of the paper and what is expected of you will be handed out by the end of the first week of class. **DO NOT WAIT** until the last minute to choose your topic. **START EARLY** working on your paper!

e. **Second take-home exam:** 25%. The second exam will cover the second half of the course, after the mid-term, and it is not cumulative. The structure of the second exam will be similar to that of the mid-term, and the test will cover the material in the books, and the material in lectures. Similarly to the midterm exam, the test will be distributed 24 hours in advance prior to its due date and time: 7:00PM on **Wednesday, May 10th.** All students are expected to submit their exam through Blackboard, and email me a back-up copy.
Important Dates:
- First quiz: February 8th
- Mid-term Exam: March 8th
- Paper due: April 5th (please bring a hard copy to class)
- Second Quiz: April 12th
- Second Exam: May 10th.

Readings: There is one required book for this course. The book is available for purchase at the University’s bookstore, as well as on-line at Amazon or other providers.


Besides the textbook, the rest of the readings for this course are either available on Blackboard or can be accessed using the University Libraries online databases (http://library.albany.edu/db/). The readings posted on Blackboard are marked on the syllabus with BB next to them. The articles available on-line through the UAlbany Library databases are marked as Electronic Resources (ER). The readings assigned from the textbook are marked with LS (Louise Shelley).

For those of you with an interest in Latin American organized crime, I also strongly encourage you to read on a regular basis the website: *Insight Crime* (http://www.insightcrime.org/).

Ground Rules:
It is important that this class remains fair for all the students and that everyone plays on an even playing field. In order to insure that the policies of the class are clear, they are spelled out below. If you have any questions about what the policy means, please ask before it becomes personally relevant.

- **Questions**

  Education is about learning. This class is about material you have probably not covered before in this context. If you have questions or things are unclear – ask questions. Ask them in lecture, during office hours, and feel free to email me to ask for further clarification. Your questions may include any problems you might have about Blackboard or any other technical aspect of the course. (Please note – I always respond to emails. If I do not respond to your email within a reasonable time, please email me again because it means that I did not get your first email.)

- **Attendance**

  Lecture attendance for this course is mandatory, and there will be no make-ups for missed quizzes without a specific medical excuse. Religious observance will be a reason for a make-up, but this needs to be brought to my attention before the student plans on being absent. If you are sick, in order to make up an exam or to remove an absence for lecture, please bring in a note from the Dean of Undergraduate studies (Lecture Center 30 Phone: 518-442-3950), who is responsible for excused absence certification. Without such a note any absence from lecture or missed exams will count against you.
Late Assignments

Unless you have gotten prior approval from me through email or have a note from the Undergraduate Dean, all late work will be penalized. All grade appeals should be made in email, and should explain exactly why you think the grading was mistaken. The email should be emailed to me.

Office hours

Office hours are your opportunity to get personalized guidance for assignments as well as help better understanding the course material. Take advantage of it. I will have weekly office hours, and will meet with you as long as necessary to help you understand the material. If these times are not good for you, then please email me, and we will set up a time that works in order to meet.

Academic Integrity

Assignments that you submit for this course will be reported to Judicial Affairs if any evidence of academic dishonesty is detected. To avoid such an unpleasant occurrence and its consequences (e.g. failing the course), please familiarize yourself with the undergraduate bulletin’s descriptions of cheating and plagiarism. You can find it at: http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html. If you have any questions about plagiarism, proper citation or any other issues involving academic integrity, please do not hesitate to come and see me. The penalties for plagiarism and cheating are severe, and it is better to clarify them as soon as they arise rather than to make a mistake in this area.

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 any Department of Literacy Teaching and Learning class, please notify the Director of Disabled Student Services (BA-120, 442-5490). That office will provide the course instructor with verification of your disability, and will recommend appropriate accommodations.” For the University’s policy, please see http://www.albany.edu/disability/index.shtml. If you wish to discuss academic accommodations for this course, please reach out to me as soon as possible.

Numerical grades are converted to letters based on the following scale:

| 100 – 93.5 = A | 83.5 – 86 = B | 73.5 – 76 = C | 63.5 – 66 = D |
| 89.5 – 93 = A– | 79.5 – 83 = B– | 69.5 – 73 = C– | 60 – 63 = D– |
| 86.5 – 89 = B+ | 76.5 – 79 = C+ | 66.5 – 69 = D+ | Below 60 = F |

CLASS SCHEDULE

January 23, 2017 – Course Introduction

– *Discuss Syllabus, Course Organization, Grading, and Class Policies*
January 25, 2017 – Globalization, Sovereignty and Conflict in the 21st Century (1)


January 30, 2017 – Globalization, Sovereignty and Conflict in the 21st Century (2)


February 1, 2017 – Violent Non-State Actors in National and International Politics (1)


February 6, 2017 – Violent Non-State Actors in National and International Politics (2)


February 8, 2017 – Contending Definitions and the Evolution of Organized Crime (1)

First Quiz!


February 13, 2017 – Contending Definitions and the Evolution of Organized Crime (2)


TRADITIONAL, HIERARCHICAL CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS

February 15, 2017 – The Italian Mafia and its Reach (1)


February 20, 2017 – The Italian Mafia and its Reach (2)


February 22, 2017 – NO CLASS TODAY

February 27, 2017 – The Italian Mafia and its Reach (3)


March 1, 2017 – Case Study: The Chinese Triads


CRIMINAL NETWORKS AND NEW FORMS OF ORGANIZED CRIME

March 6, 2017 – Networks and Transnational Organized Crime. Case Study: The Russian Mafia


March 8, 2017: TAKE-HOME MIDTERM EXAM due at 7:00PM EST.

March 11 to March 19, 2017: SPRING Break!
March 20, 2017 – 3rd Generation Gangs (1)


Hagedorn, John M., Chapter 2: Street Institutions: Why Some Gangs Won’t Go Away, in A World of Gangs, University of Minnesota Press, 2008: 11 – 22. (BB)


March 22, 2017 – 3rd Generation Gangs (2)


ORGANIZED CRIME AND INTERNAL CONFLICT

March 27, 2017 – Internal Conflict and Criminality: The Case of Iraq


March 29, 2017 – Afghanistan: Drug Trafficking, Military Intervention, and Ungoverned Spaces


April 3, 2017 – Mexico: From Corruption to Extreme Violence (1)


April 5, 2017 – Mexico: From Corruption to Extreme Violence (2)

RESEARCH PAPER DUE BY THE END OF CLASS!


April 10, 2017 – Passover: CLASSES SUSPENDED
Second quiz!


April 17, 2017 – Drug Trafficking and Internal Conflict: Colombia (1)


April 19, 2017 – Drug Trafficking and Internal Conflict: Colombia (2)


“Drugs and Democracy in Colombia,” Chapter 2 in Godson, Menace to Society, 71 – 99. (BB)

OTHER 21st CENTURY CHALLENGES

April 24, 2017 – Money Laundering & Illicit Financial Flows


TUESDAY April 24, 2017 – Crime-Terror Nexus: THIS IS A MAKE-UP SESSION for Monday, May 8th, when there is no class.


April 26, 2017 – State Failure and Piracy in the Horn of Africa


May 1, 2017 – Organized Crime Goes Cyber (1)


May 3, 2017 – Organized Crime Goes Cyber (2). Conclusions


May 8, 2017: NO CLASS (Please attend make-up session on Tuesday, April 25th)


**HAVE A GREAT SUMMER EVERYONE!!!**