Why do militant groups employ terrorist methods? What forces or pressures drive militant leaders to employ such controversial methods in pursuit of their aims? This course provides students an opportunity to study what terrorists do, and why they do it, helping them formulate answers to these questions. To facilitate the inquiry, much of the course is devoted to developing and applying five alternative theories or lenses through which militant groups can be analyzed. These stress the effects on militant action of ideology; social structural and psychological factors; organizational dynamics, and strategic or cost-benefit analysis. The course also examines a diverse array of militant groups, including entities like violent offshoots of contemporary right-wing militias and other al-Qaeda inspired militants in the United States, “Jihadi” groups in Pakistan, the Weather Underground, the Provisional Irish Republican Army, and others.

**Required Texts:**


**Optional Texts:**

1. Diego Gambetta, ed. *Making Sense of Suicide Missions*, Oxford University Press. HEREAFTER Gambetta

Optional texts and optional readings below may be especially useful for graduate student participants.

**Course Requirements:**

One short paper (4-6 pages) = 20%

One hourly exam = 25%

One long paper (9-12 pages) = 35%

Bibliography and three quizzes = 20%
Note on quizzes: completing assigned readings is essential to your performance and participation in the course. Twice during the semester I will ask you to answer a question based directly on the readings in class (you will be given 20-30 minutes). I will grade these with a plus, check, or minus (I expect most students will get a check).

To do well on quizzes, complete the readings for that day and make sure you know what are the author’s main arguments and key supporting points. To be especially prepared, spend a few minutes before class thinking about questions or concerns that the reading raised for you, or things that you believe warrant further discussion.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

**Jan 18**

Course introduction

**Jan 20**  Putting the *terror* into terrorism.

Discussion of 9/11 and Mumbai massacre

*Reading:*


**Section I: What is Terrorism?**

**Jan 25**  Defining Terrorism

*Reading:*

PLEASE get a head start on reading for next few classes, especially Feb. 3 (which has the heaviest reading of the course); for example it is recommended you read the Vaniak article ahead of time, as it is especially (and unusually) dense

**Jan. 27**  Defining Terrorism; Some Controversies

What is distinctive about terrorism as a method of armed conflict? Through what pathways or mechanisms do the strategy/strategies of terrorism supposedly work. What are these strategies of terrorism?

*Reading:*


**Feb. 1** Can states be “terrorists”?  

E.g., how should we consider the bombing of German cities in W.W.II. or the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki; Sherman’s march through the South, etc.

Reading:

1. Primoratz, chapters TBA

**Feb. 3** Is an objective, universally applied, definition of terror possible?  

Reading:

2. Hoffman, 20-35, section titled: Why is terrorism so hard to define?
3. News articles
   a. Articles on Joseph Allen Stack (flew his plan into an I.R.S. office building)  
   b. Articles on Luis Posada Carriles (anti-Cuban militant who when under the employ of C.I.A. oversaw bombings, etc. in Havana)

**OPTIONAL Reading**

2. Press Articles on Jared Loughner.

**February 8** The national and international politics of naming terrorists

Reading:

2. Review briefly PDF of state department list of terrorist organizations

Optional

1. “The Uses and Abuses of lists” in Martha Crenshaw, ed. The Consequences of Counterterrorism, Russell Sage, 2010

Section II: Models

The Ideology Model

Feb. 10 Preview of perspectives/models for why militants employ terrorist methods

Introduction to the “Ideology” model

Reading

1. Chapter on skinheads in Michael P. Arena and Cruce A. Arrigo, The Terrorist Identity, NYU Press, 2006

Feb 15 The case of social-revolutionary terrorism: The Weather Underground

Reading:

1. Ehud Sprinzak, “The psychopolitical formation of extreme left terrorism in a democracy: The case of the Weatherman” in Reich, ed. (see your textbook)

Feb. 17 Religiously-inspired terrorism: examples from three major religious traditions

Rabbi Kahane; Timothy McVeigh and Christian-Patriots; Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri

Reading:

1. Hoffman, chapter 4
2. CRS brief outline of Islam

Feb. 22 Religiously-inspired terrorism (con’t)
Reading:


Optional:

1. News articles on Timothy McVeigh and Oklahoma city bombing
3. News Articles on Hutaree

The Sociological/Psychological Model(s)

Feb. 24 Social structure; Economic Inequality and Poverty: do they “cause” terrorism?

Reading:


Optional:


March 1 Psycho-pathological approaches: Are terrorists “unbalanced” or “crazy”?

Reading:

Optional:

1. Albert Bandura, “Mechanisms of moral disengagement” in Reich (textbook)

March 3 Interaction of Ideology and psychology

Readings:

1. Articles on Faisal Shahzad and Zachary Chesser TBA

Optional:

1. “Terrorism and the International Anarchist Movement of the twentieth century” Studies in Conflict and Terrorism 32, no. 3, (March 2009)

March 8 Psychology and Small group dynamics

Reading:

1. Stern, Chapter two, “Humiliation”

Optional:


March 10 Psycho-sociological approaches: the interaction of psychology and social structure

PAPER DUE ON MARCH 10 AT START OF CLASS

Reading:

Optional:

The Organizational/Bureaucratic model

March 22 Terrorism, Inc.
Terrorism as a business enterprise?

Reading
1. Shapiro and Siegel, “Underfunding in Terrorist Organizations” International Studies Quarterly, no. 2 (2007) (NOTE: mathematical section of this article is optional; just try to get their approach, assumptions, and their take-away points)
2. Stern, chapter on Pakistani militant organizations, 188-236

Optional

March 29 Terrorism as a business enterprise (con’t)

Case Study: Al Qaeda as an organization

Reading:

1. Articles from West Point’s Center for Combating Terrorism, TBA http://www.ctc.usma.edu/

April 5 Al Qaeda (continued)

Reading:


Optional:


**The Strategic Choice Model**

**April 12** What is a strategic choice approach?

Exploring the effects of external stimuli: the political environment: resources, social support and strategies of adversary

Reading

1. Martha Crenshaw, “The logic of terrorism: terrorist behavior as a product of strategic choice” in Reich (textbook)

**April 14** The Provisional Irish Republican Army: background and history

Reading:


**April 19** PIRA (con’t)

How are the actions and behavior of the PIRA over-time consistent with a strategic choice approach?

**April 26:** Catch-up and Discussion and review for exam

**April 28** Hourly Exam: In class essay exam

**May 3** Library/bibliography exercise (details to be discussed in class)

**May 5** Review and paper presentations

**PAPER DUE:** MAY 11 at start of regularly scheduled exam time.