

BEHAVIORAL APPROACHES TO TERRORISM

Universität Mannheim
School of Social Science
Chair of Political Science IV
Proseminar, Fall/Winter 2016
5 ECTS

Instructor:	Clayton Besaw	Time:	Wednesdays 13:45 - 15:15
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Course Description: While much contemporary terrorism literature has focused on mezzo (group-level) and macro (country-level) explanations for understanding violent extremism, the study of micro (individual) explanations of terrorism is currently experiencing a genesis of robust scientific work. This seminar will introduce students to the scientific behavioral study of terrorism. Questions of interest for behavioral approaches concern the motivations for joining and/or supporting terrorist-organizations, the choice to use violence, theories of radicalization, and decision making within violent extremist organizations.. Students will be exposed to a diverse set of literature that examines the role of topics studied within social-psychology, sociology, political science, and evolutionary biology and neurology. The goal of this seminar is to help students to open the "black-box" of terrorism and to understand the diverse individual centered approaches to understanding the choice to engage in violence.

Course Objectives: The objectives for this seminar include, but are not limited to, the following components:

- Introduction to the concept of terrorism as a form of political violence.
- To familiarize students with contemporary social science literature concerning terrorism.
- To build understanding of how behavioral science research can help us to understand the **whys** and **hows** of terrorist behavior.
- To improve the student's ability to understand, synthesize, and critically reflect scientific studies and literature concerning terrorism and individual behavior.
- To improve the student's ability to socially engage in informed scientific discussion.
- To improve the student's ability to creatively organize and engage in academic research.

Course Assessment: Your grade in this course is based on a final research paper. In order to sign up for your research paper topic, **you must pass** a series of ungraded assignments over the course of the semester.

Graded Assignment

Research Paper: The final paper will be due no later than midnight on December 22nd. Expectations and requirements will be discussed during the semester both in class and online.

Ungraded Assignments.

Attendance: Attendance and participation are important aspects of one's academic endeavor. All students are highly encouraged to ask questions and promote discussion. Related to this, all students are required to miss **no more than two** seminar sessions without my prior approval. Valid excuses must include a proof of either a 1) Medical reason, 2) Family or personal emergency, or a 3) University sanctioned meeting or program that takes place during class time.

Discussion Leader Presentation: Each student will be required to serve as a discussion leader for **one** reading during the semester. Students will have a chance to choose their article of choice during the first two weeks of class. As a discussion leader you are expected to provide the following:

- Provide a brief overview of the topic, argument, hypotheses, methods, and findings of a reading. You are not expected to provide a lengthy summarization of these concepts, as the class has already read the pieces in question.
- Critically discuss the theses, assumptions, and methodological approach made by the author(s).
- Formulate discussion points and questions related to the ideas above that are meant to stimulate discussion among the wider class.
- Answer questions from other students and to help provide conceptual clarity to students who require it.

Discussion leader presentations should not run over 25 minutes. Students are free to choose their medium of presenting, whether that be a power point presentation, a round table discussion, or something else entirely. It is recommended that you speak to me **at least** one week prior to your discussion leader date for feedback and suggestions concerning your strategy. Once the discussion leader schedule is finalized, a formal schedule will be posted online for your convenience.

Discussion Questions: Each student should provide **at least** two weekly questions concerning that week's series of readings. You must upload your questions to the Ilias course portal by midnight on the Tuesday before class. You are expected to turn in questions every week, but you will be allowed to miss **only two** weeks of question turn-ins before losing credit for this ungraded assignment.

Paper Proposal: Each student must turn in a research paper proposal to me by midnight on **October 26th**. Specific requirements for the proposal will be discussed in class and online during the semester. This proposal will serve as the basis for constructing your final graded paper, so it is important that you speak to me about your potential topic before turning in the proposal. Creative research can be a daunting task, but it is important for expanding the scope of academic knowledge and helping you to refine your skills in writing, researching, and analysis. Broadly recommended topics for this class include, but are not limited to:

- Motivations for joining/engaging in terrorism.
- Decision making of terrorist organizations and leaders.
- Recruitment and social engagement by terrorist organizations.
- Social, religious, and cultural foundations for violent extremism.
- Genesis and evolution of terrorist movements and/or terrorist individuals.
- Human psychology (beliefs, emotion, social-pressures) and terrorism.
- Critical reflections of the "terrorist" individual.
- Reflections concerning the social-construction of individual and societal-wide discourse concerning violent extremism.

Peer Review and Feedback: Finally, each student must provide feedback on two of their peer's research proposals. Peer reviewers will be randomly assigned during the semester, with peer reviewers being given two weeks to read and provide substantive advice and constructive criticism. Your peer reviews will be due by midnight on **November 9th**. Expectations and requirements for your peer reviews will be discussed in class and online during the semester.

Final Remarks: The above material is tentative and subject to change with proper notice by the instructor. Additional concerns and clarification will be conducted through email, office hour appointments, and an online discussion form (ILIAS). All readings for this course will be procurable from online sources, including my own website that will help to serve this course. In-class time is important, and it is vital that we utilize these outside sources to save class for mostly discussion purposes.

Important Dates:

Research Paper Proposal	October 26th
Peer Review Feedback	November 9th
Final Research Paper	December 22nd

Finally, this course deals with contentious political, social, and religious issues. The goal of this course is not to propagate stereotypes or provide evidence for simplistic answers to the problem of terrorism and violent extremism. We will read many authors, including terrorists themselves, who hold a variety of viewpoints and methodological approaches. It is not my intent to show you who is "good" or "bad", but to expose you to an objective overview of bottom-up approaches to understanding how individuals make the decision to engage in violence. I expect that class discussion should reflect a critical, objective, and distanced analysis of the readings chosen for this seminar. Lastly, many of the readings deal with difficult situations and themes. Some will recount acts of violence and warfare that can hard to digest. For us to better understand the concept of terrorism and terrorists, we should attempt to understand the difficult reality of this subject of study.

Courses Schedule & Readings

Week 1 (September 7th, 2016): Introduction & Course Setup

- No readings.
- Social introductions, and brief discussion of the goals for this course.

Part I: Introduction

Week 2 (September 14th, 2016): Conceptualizing Terrorism and the Individual

- Sign up for discussion leader dates/readings.

Substantive Readings

Victoroff, Jeff. "The Mind of the terrorist: A review and critique of psychological approaches." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no 1 (2005): 3-42

Research Paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods.* - Chapter 1: So you have to write a research paper? Cq Press, 2015. p 1 - 7.

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods.* - Chapter 2: *Getting Started: Finding a Research Question* Cq Press, 2015. p 13 - 29.

Week 3 (September 21st, 2016): Reading Extremists and their Words

Substantive Readings

Marighella, Carlos. "Minimanual of the urban guerrilla." *Survival* 13, no. 3 (1971): 3-12.

Bin Laden, Osama. "Liberating humans before liberating countries." *Office of the Director of National Intelligence Collection*, Washington D.C.: 1-16.

Bray, Michael. "The Murder of God's Prophet." *Writings of Reverend Michael Bray of the Army of God*.

Prabhakaran, Velupillai. "National Heroes Day Address." *Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam*.(2006).

Research Paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods.* - Chapter 4: *Making Sense of the Scholarly Answers to your Research Question: Writing the Literature Review* Cq Press, 2015. p 57 - 69.

Part II: Terrorism and the Individual

Week 4 (September 28th, 2016): Early Psychoanalytic Analyses of Violent Extremism

Substantive Readings

Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth - Colonial War and Mental Disorders*. New York: Grove Press. 181 - 233

Rash, Wilfried. "Psychological dimensions of political terrorism in the Federal Republic of Germany." *International journal of law and psychiatry* 2, no. 1 (1979): 79-85.

Research Paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods.* - Chapter 5: *Effectively Distilling Your Argument: The Thesis, Model, and Hypothesis*. Cq Press, 2015. p 73 - 85.

Week 5 (October 5th, 2016): Contemporary Psychological Approaches to Terrorism.

Substantive Readings

Post, Jerrold, Ehud Sprinzak, and Laurita Denny. "The terrorists in their own words: Interviews with 35 incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 15, no 1 (2003): 171-184.

Kruglanski, Arie., and Shira Fishman. "The psychology of terrorism: "Syndrome" versus "tool" perspectives." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 2 (2006): 193-215.

Crenshaw, Martha. "The psychology of terrorism: An agenda for the 21st century." *Political Psychology* 21, no. 2 (2000): 405-420.

Research paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods. - Chapter 7: Making Your Plan and Protecting Yourself from Criticism: The Research Design* Cq Press, 2015. p 99 - 126.

Week 6 (October 12th, 2016): Who engages in terrorism?

Substantive Readings

Atran, Scott. "Genesis of suicide terrorism" *Science* 299, no. 5612 (2003): 1534-1539.

Cottee, Simon, and Keith Hayward. "Terrorist (e) motives: The existential attractions of terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 12 (2011): 963-986.

Research Paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods. - Chapter 8: Evaluating the Argument: The Analysis and Assessment Section* Cq Press, 2015. p 131 - 149.

Week 7 (October 19th, 2016): Why do extremists quit terrorism?

Substantive Readings

Alonso, Rogelio. "Why do terrorists stop? Analyzing why ETA members abandon or continue with terrorism." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 34, no. 9 (2011): 696-716.

Oppenheim, Ben, Abbey Steele, Juan Vargas, and Michael Weintraub. "True Believers, Deserters, and Traitors: Who Leaves Insurgent Groups and Why?" *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 5 (2015): 794-823

Horgan, John, and Kurt Braddock. "rehabilitating the Terrorists?: Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization programs." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 22, no. 2 (2010): 267-291.

Research Paper Preparation

Baglione, Lisa. *Writing a research paper in political science: A Practical guide to inquiry, structure, and methods. - Chapter 9: Bringing the Paper Together in Three Essential Ways: The Conclusion, Introduction, and Title* Cq Press, 2015. p 153 - 169.

Part III: Psychological and Social Theories of Terrorism

Week 8 (October 26th, 2016): Rational Choice Theory.

Substantive Readings

Sandler, Todd and Walter Enders. "Transnational terrorism: An economic analysis." *The economic impact of terrorist attacks* (2005).

Lake, David. "Rational extremism: Understanding terrorism in the twenty-first century." *Dialogue IO* 1, no. 1 (2002): 15-29.

Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. "The strategies of terrorism." *International Security* 31, no. 1 (2006): 49-80.

Week 9 (November 2nd, 2016): Sociological Approaches.

Substantive Readings

Bandura, Albert. "Mechanisms of moral disengagement in terrorism." *Origins of terrorism: psychologies ideologies, states of mind* (1990): 161-191.

Weinberg, Leonard, and William Eubank. "Cultural differences in the behavior of terrorists." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 6, no. 1 (1994): 1-18.

Piazza, James A. "Rooted in poverty?: Terrorism, poor economic development, and social cleavages 1." *Terrorism and Political Violence* 18, no. 1 (2006): 159-177.

Week 10 (November 9th, 2016): Individual and Group Emotions.

Substantive Readings

Gines, Jeremy., and Scott Atran. "Humiliation and the inertia effect: Implications for understanding violence and compromise in intractable inter-group conflicts." *Journal of Cognition and Culture* 8, no. 3 (2008): 281-294.

Pearlman, Wendy. "Emotions and the Microfoundations of the Arab Uprisings." *Perspectives on Politics* 11, no. 02 (2013): 387-409

Hatemi, Peter K., Rose McDermott, Lindon J. Eaves, Kenneth S. Kendler, and Michael C. Neale. "Fear as a Disposition and an Emotional State: A Genetic and Environmental Approach to OutGroup Political Preferences." *American Journal of Political Science* 57, no. 2 (2013): 279-293.

Week 11 (November 16th, 2016): Beliefs and Cognitive Processes

Substantive Readings

Schafer, Mark, Sam Robison, and Bradley Aldrich. "Operational codes and the 1916 easter rising in Ireland: A test of the frustration-aggression hypothesis." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 2, no. 1 (2006): 63-82.

Besaw, Clayton. "Why we fight: Understanding belief and personality heterogeneity between leaders of violent and non-violent Palestinian political organizations." (2016): 1-34.

Atran, Scott, Hammad Sheikh, and Angel Gomez. "Devoted actors sacrifice for close comrades and sacred cause." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111, no. 50 (2014): 17702-17703.

Week 12 (November 23rd, 2016): Movie

Substantive Readings

Choose from the following: Der Baader Meinhof Komplex **or** The Battle of Algiers **or** The Act of Killing

Week 13 (November 30th, 2016): Evolutionary Psychology and Biology.

Substantive Readings

Ginges, Jeremy, and Scott Atran. "What motivates participation in violent political action." *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1167, no. 1 (2009): 115-123.

Liddle, James R., Lance S. Bush, and Todd K. Shackelford. "An introduction to evolutionary psychology and its application to suicide terrorism." *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 3, no. 3 (2011): 176-197.

Thayer, Bradley A., and Valerie M. Hudson. "Sex and the Shaheed: Insights from the life sciences on Islamic suicide terrorism." *International Security* 34, no. 4 (2010): 37-62.

Part IV: Conclusion and Behavioral Approaches to Counter Terrorism

Week 14 (December 7th, 2016): Countering Extremism and Terrorism

Substantive Readings

Abrahms, Max. "What terrorists really want: Terrorist motives and counterterrorism strategy." *International Security* 32, no. 4 (2008): 78-105.

Kruglanski, Arie W., and Shira Fishman. "Psychological factors in terrorism and counterterrorism: Individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis." *Social Issues and Policy Review* 3, no. 1 (2009): 1-44.

Moghadam, Assaf. "Motives for martyrdom: Al-Qaida, Salafi Jihad, and the spread of suicide attacks." *International Security* 33, no. 3 (2009): 46-78.