I. Course Description and Objectives

Why do terrorists do what they do? What can we do to stop them? This course will introduce students to the study of terrorism. We will cover the history and evolution of the tactic, from the Zealots to al Qaeda to ISIS. We will assess terrorists’ motivations and how they market their causes to various publics. We will explore risk factors at various levels, including global, national, group, and personal. Terrorists are exploiting social media to advertise their mission, boast about their successes, and to target potential recruits. What are the pros and cons of taking down their social media messages? What are the costs and benefits of traditional counter-terrorism measures, such as targeted killing using drones? After completing this course, students will have a much more nuanced and intellectually grounded understanding of terrorism.

Terrorism dominates the headlines, but few attempt to think critically about the origins and evolution of terrorist groups over the course of history. The history of terrorism, however, is rife with puzzles. What is terrorism? Why do groups take up arms against fellow civilians to effect political change? Why and how do terrorist groups evolve, and why and how do they end? What are the most effective ways to combat terrorism? The five primary goals of the course are to: (1) present leading theories and concepts for understanding terrorist behavior; (2) evaluate theories of terrorism; (3) apply these theories to analyze current terrorist trends and make predictions about future developments; (4) provide students an opportunity to conduct research and write an original paper; and (5) allow students to deepen their knowledge about several major terrorist groups around the globe.

Required Readings
The readings for this course offer conflicting interpretations of theory and history. Students should read these texts with the goals of identifying, comparing, evaluating, and contesting contending arguments.

II. Course Requirements

Class Participation (20%): Students will be expected to attend regularly, read thoughtfully, and participate actively in class discussions. Students will be expected to be able to talk about current news stories relevant to the topic of the class.

Response Papers/Presentations (8% each, total 40%): Students will be asked to write five short (2-3 pages, double-spaced, 1inch margins) analytical response papers throughout the semester, and to spend five minutes at the start of each class presenting their findings. Any quotations must be cited appropriately. Help with citations
is available at the Writing Center as well as on line. The response paper will summarize and analyze the core arguments for each of the day’s readings, and how the readings build on what we have already discussed in class. Response papers will be evaluated on the basis of comprehension, accuracy, clarity, and organization. Students will sign up for five topics on the first day of class and must submit the response papers to turnitin.com 48 hours before their assigned topic is discussed in class, that is, by 9 am Wednesday. Late response papers will be subject to substantial deductions. The most important gift I can give you as your instructor is to help you learn to write and present your thoughts succinctly. Frequent writing assignments are thus critical to your development not only as a scholar or a policy analyst, but in nearly any career you choose to pursue.

On line resources for help with writing are available here.

Undergraduate Students - Final Exam (40%): The undergraduate final exam will be a 7-8 page take-home essay. It will be distributed at the end of class on 12/2 and is due via turnitin.com by noon on 12/9.

Graduate Students - Research Paper (40%): In place of a final exam, graduate students must write a 20-page research paper. Students are required to present an abstract and preliminary list of sources in class on October 28th. Papers must be submitted via turnitin.com by noon on 12/9.

III. Course Policies

Electronics Policy: Computers and phones may not be used in class, except to look up facts at the request of the professor. The data are clear that note-taking by hand is more useful for learning. For example, according to experiments summarized in the Wall Street Journal, “Students who take notes by hand in class outperform students who type notes. As more students use their phones, laptops and tablets in class, they may be surprised to learn they will have more success learning new material if they write.”1 Students should also know texting or personal use of social media in professional settings makes students/employees appear unserious and unprofessional.

Academic Integrity: Cheating and plagiarism will be punished in accordance with BU’s Academic Conduct Code: http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/.

Late Work: Late submissions will have a full-letter grade deducted each day beginning with the assignment deadline. Make up examinations will be granted only in exceptional cases.

Special Needs and Other Concerns: If you have any special needs or circumstances, such as a learning disability or health issue, please feel free to speak with me, and we can discuss suitable accommodations. The Office of Disability Services is the only office that may grant accommodations for students. When a student is in need of a short term release from an academic requirement and there is no clear “disability” involved, students may request clemency from their professors.

Clinicians at Student Health Services generally do not write excuse letters or emails advocating for a student who is requesting release from an academic requirement. When meeting with a student our practice is to encourage students to speak directly with their professors.Clinicians will provide our business card to the students as proof of the visit. If a student is in an acute crisis and requires immediate clinical attention and will miss a class or assignment, an email may be sent to the necessary academic staff from the University Service Center.

References:

IV. Final Paper for Graduate Students

Your job is to pose a question or present a problem. The first question the reader wants to know: Why should we care about this problem? You will need to craft a thesis or an answer to the problem you propose to address and support your position with carefully analyzed evidence. Please consider the kinds of evidence or arguments that would prove your position wrong, and respond to those arguments. Claims of fact must be supported by data or citation to scholarly sources. In your conclusion, suggest implications for policy.

Sources for Research Projects on Terrorism:

- **ARTICLES IN REFEREED JOURNALS**
  The following are some of the leading scholarly journals:
  - Contemporary Security
  - Policy Critical Terrorism Studies
  - Democracy & Security
  - International Affairs
  - International Security
  - Journal of Policing, Intelligence, and Counter Terrorism
  - Studies in Conflict & Terrorism
  - Security Studies
  - Survival

- **POLICY JOURNALS**
  The following are some of the leading policy journals:
  - Fletcher Forum on World Affairs
  - Georgetown Journal of International Affairs
  - Foreign Affairs
  - Foreign Policy
  - Intelligence & National Security
  - Washington Quarterly
  - SAIS Review
  - The RUSI Journal

- **NEWS PERIODICALS AND MAGAZINES**
  - Good sources include the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Financial Times, the Economist, Atlantic Monthly.

- **SPECIALIZED NEWS ANALYSIS/INTELLIGENCE SERVICES**
  - Oxford Analytica and Jane’s Information Group are among the useful sources of news in this category, but are not always accessible through the library.

V. Weekly Readings

**Week 1 (9/9): How to Study Terrorism? Some Definitions [81 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 2 (9/16): Terrorism in Historical Context [63 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 3 (9/23): Risk Factors at the Individual Level [60 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 4 (9/30) Risk Factors at the Societal Level [87 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 5 (10/7): Organizational Dynamics [87 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 6 (10/14): Is Violence Contagious? [57 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 7 (10/21): Case Study: Self-Starters and Lone Wolves [93 pages]**

Readings (Econometrics)


**Week 8 (10/28): Case Study: Identity Christians and neo-Nazis [91 pages]**

**Abstract Required**

Readings:


**Week 9 (11/4): Recruitment: Jihadis– Readings to be added based on current events**

Readings:


**Week 10 (11/11): Suicide/Murder – A Political Act or an Act of Suicide? 81 pages**

Readings:


**Week 11 (11/18): How Terrorism Evolves [74 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 12 (12/2): Counterterrorism [81 pages]**

Readings:


**Week 13 (12/9): Can Terrorism Be Unlearned? [110 pages]**

Readings:


