

POL 380-H1 S
International Terrorism and Insurgency
WINTER 2026
Th 3–5 pm, OI 5170

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Office Hours: F 12–1 pm, SS 3044

Overview and Objectives

What motivates a terrorist? When do people resort to various forms of unconventional political participation, such as an insurgency or terrorist attacks against the state? Under what conditions will such actions lead to changes in state behavior? What are successful counter-terrorist or counter-insurgency strategies?

The course introduces students to the scientific explanations for the causes and consequences of various types of non-state political violence, such as terrorism, insurgencies, political protests, and civil war. More broadly, the course will help foster students' ability to apply the social scientific method to the study of political outcomes. As such, this is not a history class or a class on current events. Though current events and historical examples will be discussed, the course will primarily focus on understanding the underlying interests of important actors, the arenas in which those actors interact, and the rules which govern these interactions.

The course will begin with defining terrorism and political violence, as well as an overview of the social scientific method and its role in the study of these topics. After this introduction, we will proceed to study the main social explanations for terrorism and the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will acquire the analytical skills necessary to study political problems;
- Students will gain knowledge on basic theories of non-state political violence;
- Students will apply social theories to explain contemporary events and historical cases;
- Students will analyze the accuracy and relevancy of their own worldviews and anticipate how people from other nations may perceive that worldview.

Requirements

Class Participation 20%: Participation grade is based on your attendance and contributions to the class discussion (quality and quantity). In preparation for each class, students are strongly encouraged to fill out a rubric, posted on Quercus. Note that attendance is required. Systematic absence from class (more than 3 missed classes) will result in a grade penalty. If you must miss more than 3 classes due to an illness, a family emergency, or other unforeseeable events, please contact the Registrar.

Two In-Class Exams, 40% each: Examinations are non-cumulative, each worth 40% of the grade. Both examinations will contain questions based entirely on the course readings and in-class discussion. Students will be evaluated on their ability to summarise and synthesize the relevant parts of the assigned readings.

Grading Scale: The course will use the standard University of Toronto undergraduate grading scale.

Required Texts

All required readings are scholarly articles and are available on www.scholar.google.com and posted on Quercus. In contrast to a traditional textbook, this course's reliance on scholarly research articles offers you an opportunity to see what contemporary research on terrorism/counterterrorism looks like in practice. This is especially helpful if you intend to take future classes in international relations or are considering graduate school. To find the articles on Scholar Google, search using the author's name and article title from any computer on campus. If you are off-campus, sign into Google Scholar through the library's website and then search using the author's name and article title.

I also encourage you to keep up-to-date on current events by reading articles relating to foreign policy and international relations in a major news media source. Two good sources are the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. They have substantial coverage of international events, and you can subscribe to either at a very reasonable student rate. A major weekly news magazine, such as the *Economist*, also provides strong coverage of international events. You can also find that many news organizations provide news online, free of charge (i.e., www.news.google.com).

Classroom Conduct: Students are expected to participate in class in a thoughtful and respectful manner while in the pursuit of knowledge accumulation. Generally, this means engaging with one another's ideas and treating others as you would like to be treated as well as *not* treating others how you would *not* like to be treated. Please see university policies on freedom of speech and discrimination and harassment.

Accommodations: Please discuss any special needs with the instructor start of the semester, for example, to request reasonable accommodations if an academic requirement conflicts with

your religious practices and/or observances. Those seeking accommodations based on disabilities should complete the appropriate documentation with Student Life Programs and Services Student Life Programs and Services.

Academic Misconduct: All acts of dishonesty in any work constitute academic misconduct. The Student Disciplinary Regulations will be followed in the event of academic misconduct.

A special note on plagiarism: plagiarism is the act of representing directly or indirectly another person's work as your own. It can involve presenting someone's speech, wholly or partially, as your; quoting without acknowledging the true source of the quoted material; copying and handing in another person's work with your name on it; and similar infractions. Even indirect quotations, paraphrasing, etc., can be considered plagiarism unless sources are properly cited.

Copyright: Course materials, including recorded lectures and slides, are the instructor's intellectual property covered by the Copyright Act, RSC 1985, c C-42. Course materials posted on Quercus or the class website may not be posted to other websites or media without the express permission of the instructor. Unauthorized reproduction, copying, or use of online recordings will constitute copyright infringement.

I reserve the right to modify the syllabus to reflect the pace of the course.

Course Outline

Jan. 8: Defining Key Concepts

- Huff, Connor, and Joshua D. Kertzer. 2018. "How the Public Defines Terrorism." *American Journal of Political Science* 62(1): 55-71.
- Richards, Anthony. 2014. "Conceptualizing Terrorism." *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 37: 213-236.

Jan. 15: Theories of Collective Action

- Finkel, Steven, and Edward N. Muller. 1998. "Rational Choice and the Dynamics of Collective Political Action: Evaluating Alternative Models with Panel Data." *American Political Science Review* 92(1): 37-49.
- Larson, Jennifer M., Jonathan Nagler, Jonathan Ronen, and Joshua A. Tucker. 2019. "Social networks and protest participation: Evidence from 130 million Twitter users." *American Journal of Political Science* 63, no. 3: 690-705.

Jan. 22: Identity and Political Violence

- Fearon, James D., and David D. Laitin. 2003. "Ethnicity, insurgency, and civil war." *American Political Science Review* 97 (1): 75-90.
- Larson, Jennifer M., and Janet I. Lewis. 2018 "Rumors, kinship networks, and rebel group formation." *International Organization* 72 (4): 871-903.

Jan. 29: Economic Causes of Political Violence

- Krueger, Alan B. and Jitka Maleckova. 2003. "Education, Poverty, and Terrorism: Is There a Causal Connection?" *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 17(4): 119-144.
- Bueno de Mesquita, Ethan. 2005. "The Quality of Terror." *American Journal of Political Science* 49(3): 515-530.

Feb. 5: Political Exclusion and Political Violence

- Gurr, Ted. 1968. "Psychological Factors in Civil Violence." *World Politics* 20(2): 245-278.
- Choi, Seung-Whan and Piazza, James A. 2016. "Ethnic groups, political exclusion and domestic terrorism." *Defence and Peace Economics* 27(1): 37-63.

Feb. 12: Midterm Examination**Feb. 26: Terrorist Organizations**

- Shapiro, Jacob N. 2013. *The Terrorist's Dilemma: Managing Violent Covert Organizations*. Princeton University Press. Chapter 2: 26–60.
- Asal, Victor, and R. Karl Rethemeyer. 2008. “The Nature of the Beast: Terrorist Organizational Characteristics and Organizational Lethality.” *Journal of Politics* 70: 437–449.

Mar. 5: Sustaining Rebellion

- Parkinson, Sarah Elizabeth. 2013. “Organizing rebellion: Rethinking high-risk mobilization and social networks in war.” *American Political Science Review* 107, no. 3: 418-432.
- Anderson, Noel, Benjamin E. Bagozzi, and Ore Koren. 2023. “Pressed to Prolong: Conscription, the Costs of Military Labor, and Civil War Duration.” *International Studies Quarterly* 67: forthcoming.

Mar. 12: Targets

- Berrebi, Claude and Esteban F. Klor. 2006. “On Terrorism and Electoral Outcomes.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 50(6): 899–925.
- Kydd, Andrew, and Barbara Walter. 2006. “The Strategies of Terrorism” *International Security* 31 (1): 49–80.

Mar. 19: Is Political Violence Successful?

- Gould, Roger V. 1991. “Multiple Networks and Mobilization in the Paris Commune, 1971.” *American Sociological Review* 56, no. 6: 716-729.
- Pape, Robert A. 2003. “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism.” *American Political Science Review* 97(3): 343–361.

Mar. 26: Counter-Terrorism

- Lyall, Jason. 2009. “Does indiscriminate violence incite insurgent attacks? Evidence from Chechnya.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 53(3): 331–362.
- Thomas, Jakana. 2014. “Rewarding bad behavior: How governments respond to terrorism in civil war.” *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 804–818.

Apr. 2: Consequences

- Huddy, Leonie, Stanley Feldman, Charles Taber, and Gallya Lahav. 2005. "Threat, anxiety, and support of antiterrorism policies." *American Journal of Political Science*. 49(3): 593–608.
- Annan, Jeannie, Christopher Blattman, Dyan Mazurana, and Khristopher Carlson. 2011. "Civil war, reintegration, and gender in Northern Uganda." *Journal of conflict resolution* 55 (6): 877-908.

Final Examination: Date/Time TBA