The Politics of Terrorism

GVPT 456
Spring 2023

Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00am – 12:15pm, TYD 1132

Contact Information

Instructor: Rithvik Yarlagadda
Drop-In Hours: 12:30pm to 1:30pm, Tuesdays & Thursdays,
Or by appointment (https://calendar.app.google/N661BejSPaYyS2fVA)
Office Location: TYD 1135E
Email: ryarlaga@umd.edu
**Include “GVPT456: [subject]” in subject field. Please DO NOT email me through ELMS.**

Course Overview

This course teaches you how to think scientifically about the politics of terrorism. It will provide an examination of the definition, causes and consequences of terrorism, along with key domestic and international counter-, and anti-terrorism responses. Special emphasis on challenges and opportunities to the scientific study of terrorism. The course explores some of the fundamental questions of terrorism: How terrorist groups operate, what kind of tactics do they adopt, how do they fund themselves, and what counterterrorism strategies are effective? It aims to develop critical thinking about these basic questions, knowledge of the details of a few selected cases, and give students experience constructing social-scientific arguments.

Please note, the course is taught from a political science disciplinary perspective. Accordingly, some of the readings for the course use quantitative methods. This can sometimes complicate understanding of the readings. We will discuss the quantitative results of these studies in class, and I will try to guide you through the methodology of each piece.

As a prerequisite for the course, students must have taken GVPT 200 (Introduction to International Relations). If you have not had one of these classes, please talk to me before continuing the class.

Required Readings


In addition to the above required book, there are a few required readings (see under the schedule below) in the form of articles or selected book chapters. These readings will be posted on the course page on elms.

**Course Requirements**

Student participation is crucial in this seminar class. To participate actively in class, students are expected to have done all the readings before class. There are three main assignments in this course—quizzes, final exam, and a final research project.

**Response Paper:**
You will upload a 2-page document (word/pdf) on ELMS summarizing your thoughts of the film “If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front” that you will be watching on March 2nd. The response paper is due via ELMS by 11:59 pm (EST) on March 9th. More details about the assignment prompt to follow soon.

**Monthly Quizzes:**
I will conduct four quizzes overall during the class time. All the quizzes are available online via ELMS. You are expected to have access to your laptops/computers on quiz days. They will be short (10 mins) and will primarily be of multiple-choice format. **Quiz 2 is mandatory** and will be slightly longer (~20 mins). For the remainder three quizzes, I will consider the best two out of them towards your grade.

**Final Exam:**
You will complete one take-home open-book exam in this course. The final exam will be held online (via ELMS) on Tuesday, May 16th. The timed exam will be available from 8 am to 6 pm on Tuesday, May 16th. You will have 75 MINS (1.25 HRS) from the time you log in until the exam closes. Log in to ELMS to take the exam. The final exam will be cumulative and is designed to demonstrate your grasp on the course readings and class discussion, and your ability to analyze and critique arguments.

**Research Project:**
This will be a group project (2 students in each group) where you will be asked to select a terrorist organization case from a specified list of organizations. You will conduct a detailed case-study of these organizations as part of this project. Each group will submit their unique choice of a terrorist organization that they will be working on by February 28th.

Towards the end of semester (May 9 & 11), each group will formally present their project findings to the class. The schedule for presentation slots (first-come first-serve) will be made available soon. The final paper will be due by 11:59 pm (EST) on May 18th. Each student in the group will individually upload their presentation slides and the final paper assignments via ELMS.

I will provide you with a handout describing the paper assignment in more detail by mid-February. At that time, I will also provide you with additional information about potential resources and guidance on choosing a relevant research topic.

**Attendance & Participation:**
Attendance is mandatory. At the beginning of each class, I will provide you with a unique attendance code. To confirm your presence in each class, you need to enter this code through the respective attendance quiz marked for that specific class on ELMS. Class participation is also important. You will be given an overall grade for attendance and participation that is based upon your attendance record and the degree to which you contribute to classroom activities and discussions.
Course Grading

Student's grades in the course are determined in the following manner:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage %</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response Paper</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team Project/Paper/Presentation</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100%</td>
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Grading Scale:

Course grades are calculated using the following grading scale: When grades fall between percentages, I will round up after 0.5:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Final Grade Cutoffs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ 97.00% + 87.00% + 77.00% + 67.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A 94.00% B 84.00% C 74.00% D 64.00% F &lt;60.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>- 90.00% - 80.00% - 70.00% - 60.00%</td>
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Course Related Policies

Communication:
All communication will be through email or ELMS. I try to respond to e-mail as soon as possible, however it may sometimes take up to 24 hours to receive a response.

This term we will be using Piazza for class discussion. The system is highly catered to getting you help fast and efficiently from classmates, the TA, and myself. Rather than emailing questions to the teaching staff, I encourage you to post your questions on Piazza. If you have any problems or feedback for the developers, email team@piazza.com.

Find our class page at: [https://piazza.com/umd/spring2023/gvpt456/info](https://piazza.com/umd/spring2023/gvpt456/info)

Contact:
I strongly encourage you to drop by my office for any clarifications of course policies, explanations of course materials/discussions, or to discuss any other concerns and/or difficulties that you encounter during this course. Be assured that our conversations will be held in the appropriate confidence; I am genuinely interested in each of you getting that most you can out of this class. If you have a scheduling conflict during my usual drop-in hours, do not hesitate to contact me for an appointment at some other time using this link [https://calendar.app.google/N661BeJSPaYyS2fVA](https://calendar.app.google/N661BeJSPaYyS2fVA). You need to book an
appointment with me at least 4 hours prior to the time slot available on a given day. In all your email correspondence with me, be sure to include “GVPT 456: [subject]” in the subject field. I will occasionally post announcements to the class through ELMS, but I cannot guarantee a timely response to direct emails sent to me through ELMS.

Electronics:
Place your phone on mute before you come to class. Once the class has begun, please refrain from texting, emailing, or browsing the Web, since such activities are distracting and disrespectful. Laptop computers and/or tablets may be used for note-taking purposes only. All other technological devices – including MP3 devices, smartphones, phones, gaming devices, etc. – are prohibited in this class. I reserve the right to revoke permission for electronic devices in the classroom if this policy is abused.

Copyright:
The course lectures and other materials are copyrighted. They may not be reproduced for anything other than personal use without written permission from me.

Accessibility:
If you have a documented disability, anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course, or have questions/concerns about access, please tell me as soon as possible. Reasonable accommodations will be made for all students with disabilities, but it is your responsibility to inform me early in the term and provide me with the proper ADS documentation. I strongly encourage you to register any disability with the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS). It is your responsibility to discuss accommodation options for taking exams, etc. with me, and for providing me with the appropriate paperwork to schedule alternative test-taking arrangements. Please do not present me with accommodation documentation from your doctor.
For more information on this see https://counseling.umd.edu/ads/prospective

Medical Absences:
Please note that the University has a policy regarding medical absences, which allows you to present a self-signed note and be excused for missing a single class meeting per semester. You must submit to me a letter that includes the date of the illness, a statement that the information you have provided is true, and your signature. This policy does NOT apply to absences on days when there is an exam or major assignment due. If you have a valid medical excuse for missing a major grading event, you must provide me with detailed written documentation from the Campus Health Center or another health care provider. Use the self-signed note form distributed by the University at: https://health.umd.edu/sites/default/files/inline-files/Medical_attestation_5-2016.pdf.

Academic Integrity:
The University of Maryland has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards applicable to all undergraduate students, and you are responsible for upholding these standards as you complete assignments and take exams in this course. Please make yourself aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information see https://studentconduct.umd.edu. If any student is believed to be in violation of the Code of Academic Integrity, they will be referred to the Student Honor Council.

Other Policies: The course policies align with those of the university Office of Undergraduate Studies. For more information, please visit: http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Lecture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>T 1/26</td>
<td>Course Overview</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>T 1/31</td>
<td>What is Terrorism? What are the Types of Terrorism?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 2/2</td>
<td>Where did Terrorism Come From? The History of Terrorism</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>T 2/7</td>
<td>How to Study Terrorism Analytically?</td>
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<td>Th 2/9</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism I: Strategic Approaches</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>T 2/14</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism II: Organizational Approaches</td>
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<td>Th 2/16</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism III: Psychological Approaches</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>T 2/21</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism IV: Ideological Approaches</td>
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<td>Th 2/23</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism V: Structural Approaches [Quiz 1]</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>T 2/28</td>
<td>Understanding Terrorism VI: Critical Approaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 3/2</td>
<td>Film: “If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front”</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>T 3/7</td>
<td>Suicide Terrorism [Response paper due]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 3/9</td>
<td>Women, Children, and Terrorism</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>T 3/14</td>
<td>Terrorist’s Provision of Social Services</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 3/16</td>
<td>No Class (Attending ISA Conference) [Quiz 2]</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>T 3/21</td>
<td>No Class (Spring Break)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Th 3/23</td>
<td>No Class (Spring Break)</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>T 3/28</td>
<td>Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Jihadi Terrorism</td>
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<td>Th 3/30</td>
<td>The Rise of Far-Right Extremism; Guest Lecture by Dr Andrew Vitak</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>T 4/4</td>
<td>Terrorist Tactics, Weapons, Target Selection, &amp; Lethality [Quiz 3]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 4/6</td>
<td>How Terrorism Ends?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>T 4/11</td>
<td>Design and Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Strategies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Th 4/13</td>
<td>State Repression and Terrorism; Guest Lecture by Dr Victor Asal</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>T 4/18</td>
<td>Terrorist Group Alliances, Rivalries, and Internal Cohesion</td>
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<td>Th 4/20</td>
<td>State Sponsorship of Terrorism</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>T 4/25</td>
<td>Crime-Terror Nexus</td>
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<td>Th 4/27</td>
<td>Lone-Wolf Terror</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>T 5/2</td>
<td>Terrorism and the Media: Old and New</td>
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<td>Th 5/4</td>
<td>The Political Effects of Terrorism [Quiz 4]</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>T 5/9</td>
<td>When do Terrorists Claim Attacks? [Presentations I]</td>
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<td>Th 5/11</td>
<td>The Future of Terrorism [Presentations II]</td>
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LECTURES AND READINGS

All readings are available on ELMS. I recommend reading the articles in the order they are listed. Additional readings are recommended for those who wish to pursue this topic further.

January 26: Course Overview

No reading.

January 31: What is Terrorism? What are the Types of Terrorism?


Additional Recommended Readings


February 2: The History of Terrorist Violence


Additional Recommended Readings


February 7: How to Study Terrorism Analytically?


Browse the following databases prior to class:

Global Terrorism Database: https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/

Rand Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents: https://www.rand.org/nsrd/projects/terrorism-incidents.html


Minorities at Risk Project (MAR): http://www.mar.umd.edu

Mapping Militants Project (MMP): https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants

South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP): https://www.satp.org

Big Allied and Dangerous (BAAD) Database: https://www.start.umd.edu/baad/database

Profiles on Individual Radicalization in the United States (PRIUS) Database: https://www.start.umd.edu/data-tools/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus

Chicago Project on Security and Terrorism (CPOST) Suicide Attack Database: https://cpost.uchicago.edu/research/suicide_attacks/database_on_suicide_attacks/
Additional Recommended Readings


February 9: Understanding Terrorism I: Strategic Approaches


Additional Recommended Readings


February 14: Understanding Terrorism II: Organizational Approaches

**Additional Recommended Readings**


**February 16: Understanding Terrorism III: Psychological Approaches**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


February 21: Understanding Terrorism IV: Ideological Approaches


Additional Recommended Readings


February 23: Understanding Terrorism V: Structural Approaches [Quiz 1]


Additional Recommended Readings


February 28: Understanding Terrorism VI: Critical Approaches


Additional Recommended Readings


**March 2: Watch Film**

“If a Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front”

**March 7: Suicide Terrorism [Response Paper Due]**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**March 9: Women, Children, and Terrorism**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**March 14: Terrorist’s Social Service Provision**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


March 16: NO CLASS (Attending ISA conference) [Quiz 2]

Take-Home Quiz via ELMS

March 21: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

March 23: NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)

March 28: Al Qaeda, ISIS, and Jihadi Terrorism


https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/islamic-state

Additional Recommended Readings


https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/


March 30: The Rise of the Global Far-Right Movement; Guest Lecture (Dr Andrew Vitak)


Additional Recommended Readings

**April 4: Terrorist Tactics, Weapons, Target Selection, & Lethality [Quiz 3]**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**April 6: How Terrorism Ends?**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**April 11: Design and Effectiveness of Counterterrorism Strategies**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


[https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717704952](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002717704952)

**April 13: State Repression and Terrorism; Guest Lecture (Dr Victor Asal)**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**April 18: Terrorist Group Alliances, Rivalries, and Internal Cohesion**

Additional Recommended Readings


April 20: State Sponsorship of Terrorism


Additional Recommended Readings


April 25: Crime-Terror Nexus

**Additional Recommended Readings**


**April 27: Lone Wolf Terror**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**May 2: Terrorism and the Media: Old and New**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**May 4: Political Effects of Terrorism [Quiz 4]**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**May 9: When do Terrorists Claim Attacks? [Presentations I]**


**Additional Recommended Readings**


**May 11: The Future of Terrorism [Presentations II]**

TBA

**May 16: Final Exam (Take-Home)**

**May 18: Final Paper Due**