COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
Department of Political Science

W3921, Section 002, Fall 2015: Terrorism and Counterterrorism
Tuesdays, 12:10 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. (711 IAB)

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Phone: 212-854-5254
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-3.00 p.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
(my office is at 736 International Affairs Building)

Course Description: The seminar is designed to illuminate students’ understanding of the most important aspects of domestic and transnational terrorism and counterterrorism with emphasis on the United States as target of and responder to this sort of political violence.

Course Requirements: Attendance of all sessions is required except for serious health problems and absences on religious holidays for observant students. If a student misses more than two classes without proof of sickness or other exceptional reasons, the final grade will be lowered by ½ point for each missed class; if a student misses five or more sessions without proof of serious sickness, he/she will fail the class.

Students must read the assigned material in preparation for each session and participate in class discussions. To make sure that everyone is well prepared, each student will compile a short list (one page or less) of interesting points, issues, and questions concerning the assigned readings for each class. Each student will select one particular terrorist organization, find and read relevant material and report on the chosen group in several class sessions in which we discuss domestic and foreign terrorist organizations. If an assigned reading is not available via the library’s reserve, please let me know as soon as you discover the problem.

Every member of the class will write a research paper (20-25 type-written, double-spaced pages) that examines one particular aspect of terrorism or counter-terrorism. We will discuss suitable topics in class. The deadline for handing in short descriptions of your paper topic is October 13th; a detailed outline with November 10th. Handing in both the short proposal and the detailed outline before the deadlines is a good idea. The completed term papers are due in our last class session. Grades will be based on class participation, including the mentioned report on a selected terrorist group, (one third of the final grade) and the research paper (two thirds).
Topics and Mandatory Readings:

Session 1  Sept. 8  Introduction: Asking the Right Questions in the Study of Terrorism and Counterterrorism. How serious is the Terrorist Threat?
Discussion of Class Format and Requirements

Session 2  Sept. 15  A Perennial Dispute: What is Terrorism? What is Violence? What is the Difference between Terrorism and Crime?

Readings:


Phil Williams, “The Terrorism Debate over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence.” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 24 (2) (April-June 2012), 259-278.


(The Appendix in Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism* summarizes major international and domestic terrorist incidents from the early 1970s to more recent times so that students get a basic understanding of past terrorist acts and respective perpetrators, victims, methods, and outcomes. I urge you to read the appendix as soon as possible because the material provides background information that will be helpful in understanding many aspects of terrorism including comparisons between various terrorism waves, groups, targets, methods, etc.).

Session 3  Sept. 22  Is Terrorism Ever Justified?

Readings:
Michael Walzer, *Arguing about War*, chapters 3, 4 and 10.


Paul Hollander, “Righteous Political Violence and Contemporary
Session 4  
Sept. 29  

**Global Context**

Readings:


Session 5  
Oct. 6  

**Domestic Context**

Readings:
Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, chapter 4;


Incidents tied to Violent Right-Wing Radicalization, see: http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/intelligence-report/browse-all-issues/2014/summer/For-the-Record


Session 6 Oct. 13

**The Making of Terrorists (Causes, Conditions, Influences, Traits)**

Readings:
Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, chapters 5 and 6

Walter Reich, *Origins of Terrorism*


**Due Today, October 13th: Two or three paragraphs that explain the topic of your term paper**

Sessions 7/8 Oct. 20/27

**Terrorist Groups: Discussion of Past and Present Organizations/Networks**

(Students report on groups they selected and studied with respect to ideologies, goals, tactics, organizational make-up, durability, etc.)

Start to read material assigned for the October 28th session.

November 3rd is Election Day and no class. Time to work on your detailed paper outline which is due on November 10th
Session 9
Nov. 10

**Terrorist Goals, Tactics, Organizations, Sponsors**

Readings:

Nacos, *Terrorism and Counterterrorism*, chapters 7, 8 and 9

Mia Bloom, *Dying to Kill*, chapter 4.

Louise Richardson, *What Terrorists Want*, chapters 4 and 5


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**Due Today, November 10: A Detailed Outline for your Research Paper with Sources**

Session 10
Nov. 17

**Women and Children in Terrorism**

Readings:

P.W. Singer, “The New Children of Terror”

P.W. Singer, “Western Militaries confront Child Soldiers Threat”
[http://www.brookings.edu/views/Articles/fellows/singer20050115.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/views/Articles/fellows/singer20050115.pdf)


Brigitte L. Nacos, “Young Western Women, Fandom, and ISIS.” e-International Relations, May 5, 2015, [http://www.e-ir.info/2015/05/05/young-western-women-fandom-and-isis/](http://www.e-ir.info/2015/05/05/young-western-women-fandom-and-isis/)

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<tr>
<th>Session 11</th>
<th>Media and Communication in the Terrorist Calculus</th>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 24</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<td>Nacos, <em>Terrorism and Counterterrorism</em>, chapters 14 and 15</td>
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<td>Terrorism and Entertainment (I will email you a chapter from my forthcoming new edition of <em>Mass-Mediated Terrorism</em>)</td>
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<td>In May 2013, a British soldier was brutally killed by two self-proclaimed Jihadists. The terrorist act was videotaped by witnesses. Read the following article and view videos: <a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10073910/Woolwich-attack-terrorist-proclaimed-an-eye-for-an-eye-after-attack.html">http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/10073910/Woolwich-attack-terrorist-proclaimed-an-eye-for-an-eye-after-attack.html</a></td>
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<th>Session 12</th>
<th>Responding to Terrorism: Hard Power, Soft Power, and Smart Power</th>
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<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<td>Nacos, <em>Terrorism and Counterterrorism</em>, chapters 10 and 11</td>
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<td>Louise Richardson, <em>What Terrorists Want</em>, chapter 8</td>
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<th>Session 13</th>
<th>Balancing Security and Civil Liberties/Human Rights in the Face of Terrorist Threats</th>
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<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>Readings:</td>
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<td>Nacos, <em>Terrorism and Counterterrorism</em>, chapter 12</td>
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Stephen Flynn, *The Edge of Disaster*, Introduction, chapter 6

John Mueller, *Overblown*, Introduction, chapters 1 and 2

I did not order books in the University Book Store but you may consider getting the following two volumes for which I assigned all chapters as required readings.


All required books and articles are on reserve in Butler Library, in some cases I will email articles or links to articles.

I will occasionally email additional articles pertinent to the discussion topics at the time.

**Books:**


**Articles:**

Except for articles with URL references, articles are accessible electronically at the Columbia Library web site under “course reserves” and can also be accessed via the Courseworks site. I will provide a few articles not available in “course reserves”


Williams, Phil, “The Terrorism Debate over Mexican Drug Trafficking Violence.” Terrorism and Political Violence 24 (2) (April-June 2012), 259-278.