Domestic Terrorism & Political Violence  
Spring 2013  
T 5:30-8:00, Ward 3

Instructor Information
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Course Description
This course investigates the causes and consequences of domestic terrorism and political violence. We will be reading, discussing, hearing, and watching first person accounts of participation in acts of violence within the United States or directed abroad by US citizens. We will examine prominent contemporary and historical terrorist acts and campaigns, hate crimes and other violent political movements through a scholarly perspective as well as the lens of the people directly involved. The course will incorporate insights from psychology, political science, economics, history, and other disciplines to attempt to understand these group’s and individual’s motivations, goals, and propensity towards violence. I teach another course related to general theories of violence and terrorism that is helpful in preparation for this course but is not required.

Learning occurs in many ways, and I strive to engage students beyond simply lecturing. We will engage in a variety of activities including direct instruction, personal writing exercises, partner and group work, class discussions, video clips, demonstrations, problem-solving activities, simulations, debates, and other critical thinking exercises. I also firmly believe in democracy and will solicit opinions regarding the course generally, and the success or failure of certain exercises specifically. This course will require a great deal of thought and participation.
We will begin by outlining various ways scholars explain the question of why activists use violence in pursuance of their political goals. We will compare and contrast these arguments, and then apply them to a host of groups and individuals across the ideological spectrum. Towards the end of the course, we will discuss law enforcement and national security responses to political violence. Finally, we have a range of speakers who will visit our class and provide important insight on specific groups, movements, and the government’s response.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Understand and apply theories of violence to actors and their actions based upon their stated objectives
2. Explain the long history of political violence in the United States
3. Develop an understanding about the individuals and movements that use political violence and terrorism in the United States
4. Read and analyze diverse kinds of scholarly work
5. Create an original research project that analyzes primary source material and identifies the reasons for a domestic group using violence

**Assessment**

1. Attendance and Participation (20%)–Attendance and participation in all class activities is required. Reading assigned course material is the critical element in being prepared. You must come to class on time and remain for the entire period.

2. Documentary/Films Projects (10%)–Choose two documentaries or films from the list at the end of the syllabus or a pre-approved film not on the list. Write a 3–5 page paper for each film that: 1. Summarizes the film (quickly) 2. Applies one of the theories to explain violence/terrorism to the actions of the individuals in the film 3. Cites direct evidence from the film to support your claims. I will provide a detailed rubric that explains how you will be assessed. The first paper is due two weeks before the midterm exam, and the second is due two weeks prior to the final.

3. Midterm Exam and Final Exam (40%)–The Midterm and Final exam will ask you to answer questions about course material, to write a series of essays related to readings and discussion from the course, and to evaluate primary source documents.

4. Final Paper (30%)–Select a group or individual who uses political violence or terrorism and explain their actions by applying theories for why people resort to violence. Cite
evidence from the group or individuals own writings (8-10 pages for undergrads/15-20 pages for grads). I will provide a detailed rubric that explains how you will be assessed. You will bring a first draft of your paper midway through the course to a writing workshop. At this workshop, you will receive feedback on your paper from the instructor and your peers. This feedback will help you revise the paper for final submission.

**Academic Integrity Code**

Students should be aware of of the contents of the AU Academic Integrity Code. I regard violations of this code seriously and will immediately refer the matter to Dean Meg Weekes, should such violations occur. Please see me if you have any questions about the academic violations described in the code either in general or as they apply to particular requirements of this course.

**Additional Support Services**

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide variety of services are available to help you in your efforts to meet the requirements of the course.

- **Academic Support Center (x3360, MGC 243):** offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities.

- **Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.**

- **Counseling Center (x3500, MGC 214):** offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

- **Disability Support Services (x3315, MGC 206):** offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical, medical or psychological disabilities.

If you qualify for accommodations due to a disability, please notify me in a timely manner with a letter from the ASC or DSS so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

**Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of an emergency that leads to university closure, we will use an alternative method to hold class. I will communicate class-specific information via AU e-mail and Blackboard. You are responsible for checking AU e-mail regularly. In the event of a declared
emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site (www.prepared.american.edu) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information.

Schedule of Topics and Reading Materials

What is Terrorism and Political Violence?
January 15

Approaches to Understanding Political Violence
January 22
Rationalist

Psychological


Sociological


Understanding and Doing Research on Political Violence

January 29
Fieldwork/Qualitative Research


Formal Theory


Quantitative Research


A History of Political Violence in America
February 5


- Rapaport, David C. “Before the Bombs There Were Mobs: American Experiences With Terror.”

The Extreme Right–Overview, The Klan, and Skinheads
February 12


- Map of Hate Groups http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-map

- National Socialist Movement http://www.nsm88.org

- Watch: Christopher Hitchens vs. Tom Metzger. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p7RX1CXiI8


- Peruse Storm Front http://www.stormfront.org/forum/t538924/
The Extreme Right–Sovereign Citizens, Patriots, the Militia Movement and Christian Identity

February 19

- Watch: *The McVeigh Tapes*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI_IorASuPo&feature=related
- Kingdom Identity Ministries http://www.kingidentity.com (Read the statement of doctrine)

**WRITING WORKSHOP**

The Extreme Right–Leaderless Resistance, Anti-Abortionists, and the Army of God

February 26


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**MIDTERM EXAM**

March 5

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MARCH 10-MARCH 17 Spring Break No Classes

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**The Far Left—Overview, Marxists**

March 19


- Prairie Fire: The Politics of Revolutionary Anti-Imperialism, Political Statement of the Weather Underground

- *Weather Underground*—interviews with the most notorious militant leftists in the US in the 1970s


- SLA Manifesto: http://feastofhateandfear.com/archives SLA.html

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**The Far Left—Environmental and Animal Activists**

March 26

- Earth Liberation Front, http://earth-liberation-front.org/


- Watch: *If a Tree Falls*—an Oscar nominated documentary about violent environmental activists called the Earth Liberation Front
Animal Liberation Front http://www.animalliberationfrontline.com/


Domestic Islamic Extremists
April 2


Peruse http://intelwire.com

Hate Crimes/Gangs and Domestic Islamic Extremists continued
April 9


Defining Gangs, NIJ. http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gangs-organized/gangs/definitions.htm


Conspiracy Theories and Lone Wolves

April 16

- Berge, JM. “Newtown and the Doomsday Preppers.” *Foreign Policy* http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/12/17/newtown_and_the_doomsday_preppers
- Watch: Doomsday Preppers https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CuUX-AWu7g
- Kaczynski, Theodore. *Industrial Society and Its Future.*
- Kaczynski’s comments on Timothy McVeigh http://www.3-3-3.org/docs/Kaczynski’s%20comments%20on%20McVeigh.htm
- *Peruse* Alex Jones and Info Wars http://www.infowars.com

Counterterrorism and Homeland Security

April 23


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**FINAL EXAM**

Wed. May 1 5:30 pm–8:00 pm
List of Documentaries and Films on Domestic Terrorism and Political Violence

Note: This list is by no means comprehensive. If you select a movie not on this list, please send me the title for my final approval.

- *Arlington Road*—Story about a terrorism professor who suspects his neighbors are extremists
- *American History X*—Film portraying the making of a Neo-Nazi
- *Army of God*—documentary about abortion-inspired terrorism in the US
- *Behind the Mask*—documentary exploring violent animal rights activists, the Animal Liberation Front
- *Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst*—inside account of the SLA who famously kidnapped a young heiress
- *If a Tree Falls*—an Oscar nominated documentary about violent environmental activists called the Earth Liberation Front
- *Weather Underground*—interviews with the most notorious militant leftists in the US in the 1970s
- *Your Mommy Kills Animals*—another portrait of violent animal rights activists