

GOVT 298, Terrorism and Film

Winter 2023
M/T/W/R/F- 9:00-11:00 AM &
2:00 – 4:00 pm

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Student hours (virtual): T/R 4:30 - 5:30 pm

Course Description

This course provides an overview of the major theoretical contributions and debates in the study of terrorism and political violence. The course readings adopt diverse theoretical lenses and methodological approaches, and focus both on theoretical overviews and on specific case studies. In addition to readings, films are meant to humanize the actors and offer an opportunity to grapple with the complexity of political violence through the prism of cinema. Through the readings, film screenings, discussions and assignments, the goal of the course is to help you understand the major controversies and debates surrounding terrorism, to equip you with the tools to critically engage with the media, academic and policy discourses on political violence, and to enhance your speaking, writing and analytical skills.

The first part of the course focuses on understanding terrorism, exploring what terrorism is, and whether it is effective, as well as the organizational and individual motivations for turning to radical tactics. We will also examine when and why individuals and organizations renounce violent tactics and walk away from terrorism, and consider the different forms of violence in the United States. The second part of the course focuses on policy implications and on how we can prevent and respond to terrorism. The readings and films raise questions about both what policies are most effective and what policies are most desirable, problematizing our understanding of security, and examining the implications of counterterrorism for civil liberties and international law. We will conclude with a discussion of continuing challenges, and a reflection on the role of the media and the cost of counter-terrorism.

We will view a variety of films, ranging from Hollywood action movies to documentaries, drawing from the experiences of different countries and stretching over different historical periods. The movies will address the question of political violence from different perspectives, so we can attempt to see the issue through the mind of the perpetrators of violence, through the minds of the victims, and through the minds of the soldiers and government officials. By exploring different forms of violence, we will consider the contours of what should or should not be considered terrorism, and question the utility and the consequences of this label. The movies can be very graphic, controversial and disturbing. Please consider this a trigger warning for graphic depictions of violence (including racial violence) and combat.

Class Format

This is an intensive course that will cover the material of an entire semester in the span of ten days. Every day covers a different theme, and there is a morning session and an

afternoon session, each with a different set of readings. Students are expected to do the assigned readings before each session, and submit a discussion question for both the morning readings and the afternoon readings. Students are also expected to watch the films between the morning and the afternoon session. Classes will be primarily focused on discussions, which will be complemented by short lectures. We will discuss in-depth the readings, and analyze the movies from the perspective of the readings and of the theoretical debates at hand.

Readings & Movies

All readings will be uploaded on Moodle, or are available online. Movies will be available for online streaming or as a DVD through the library reserve system.

Assignments and Grades

Grading

The grades for this class will be based on a total of 100 possible points, broken down as follows:

Attendance	10 points
Participation	10 points
Daily discussion questions	10 points
Case study	25 points
Group project & presentation	10 points
Midterm Exam	15 points
Final exam	20 points

Attendance & Participation

For this class to be successful, everybody should be ready to engage in meaningful discussions and intellectual debates with one another during our online sessions. You should come to class prepared to discuss the readings, and to engage with both the course material and with your colleagues. Meaningful participation requires that you treat everybody with respect, regardless of whether you agree or disagree with their views. Given the topic of the course, we will discuss some controversial issues, and disagreement is bound to emerge. It is never appropriate for critiques to degenerate into personal attacks, and it is crucial that debates are civil, respectful and grounded in intellectual arguments.

Daily Discussion Questions

Before every session, you should submit a discussion question in the discussion forum on Moodle by 8 am for the morning session, and 1 pm for the afternoon session. The questions may critique particular claims or question underlying assumptions in the readings/film, draw connections between the films and the readings, draw connections between the readings/films and other topics or texts discussed, relate the readings/films to current events, raise questions about policy implications, or draw attention to problematic concepts and arguments that we should clarify or discuss in greater detail in class. In order

to receive full credit, your questions have to be submitted on time and reflect a serious engagement with the readings. You are also encouraged to read and engage with the questions submitted by your colleagues.

Case Study

In addition to the groups covered in class, every student will also choose an armed group to research throughout the semester. Over winter break, students will pick their case from a list of 6 possible groups. You will write your case study in 3 stages, and then you will work collectively in a small group on outlining the policy implications emerging from your case study.

Paper 1 (10 points) – due Monday, January 5th, 9 am, via TurnItIn on Moodle

The first paper should be in the form of a 3-4 page double-spaced background brief that should provide a concise overview of the group. This includes an overview of when and how the group was established, size, ideology, goals, and tactics. The paper should be well-researched and well-documented, and draw on a wide variety of reputable sources.

Paper 2 (5 points) – due Tuesday, January 6th, 9 am, via TurnItIn on Moodle

The second paper consists of a short one-page reflection that should engage class readings and discuss whether the group should be defined as a terrorist group, and if not, it should discuss what label would be most appropriate.

Paper 3 (10 points) – due Monday, Jan. 16th, 9 am, via TurnItIn on Moodle

The third paper should be in the form of a 3-4 page double-spaced report that should offer a convincing account of why this group has emerged, why it adopted violence, if relevant why it renounced violence, and why it survived/declined. Your memo should be well-researched and well-documented, and fully engage class readings and theoretical arguments about the causes of violence, the choice of armed versus nonviolent resistance, and the dynamics of deradicalization.

Group project and presentation (10 points) – in class, afternoon session of Jan. 23rd

The final part of your case study will be to work in a small group on the policy recommendations that emerge from your case, and to present your conclusions to the class. You will spend some time discussing as a small group in class, and are also expected to work on this outside of class. You will present as a small group during the final class session on January 23rd. This presentation should outline the most appropriate policy responses to the group, or if the group has abandoned armed resistance it should outline the key policy lessons that we can learn.

If your group is still actively pursuing violence, your presentation should address the following questions: 1) Who does this group target, and for whom does it pose the most significant threat?, 2) Which actors should respond to this group? , 3) Given your understanding of the motivations for violence and what has sustained this group, what policy responses are most adequate?

If your group has ceased to exist, or has given up arms, your presentation should address the following questions: 1) Who did this group target, and who did it pose the most significant threat to?, 2) How did different actors respond to this group, and which actors took the most significant action towards the group, 3) What policy lessons can we learn from this group, and are they generalizable?

Midterm Exam – in class, morning session of Wednesday, Jan. 18th

The midterm exam will consist of an essay question that will ask you to reflect on the materials from the course.

Final Exam – in person, Jan. 25th

The final exam will be in the form of two broad essay questions that will require you to integrate the materials from the entire semester. You will receive study questions on the last day of class.

Other Policies

Unless you have an emergency or we make arrangements in advance, late assignments will be penalized, and you will lose 3% of the grade for each day that it is late. If you think you need flexibility with a deadline, please contact me as early as possible before the due date.

If you need to miss class discussions because of a religious observance, please notify me as early as possible so we can make arrangements in advance.

Please note that I reserve the right to make changes and adjustments to the syllabus throughout the semester. Should such changes happen, you will be notified during the online class sessions and via Moodle.

Grading Rubric

97-100 points	A+	70-72 points	C-
93-96 points	A	67-69 points	D+
90-92 points	A-	63-66 points	D
87-89 points	B+	60-62 points	D-
83-86 points	B	57-59 points	E+
80-82 points	B-	53-56 points	E
77-79 points	C+	50-52 points	E-
73-76 points	C	Under 50 points	F

Academic Honesty

Please note that in this course, no form of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. Infractions can result in you failing the entire course. All students of Wesleyan University are responsible for knowing and adhering to the [Honor Code](#) of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council – Office of Student Affairs. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from

the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). [The Office of Student Affairs](#) has more information.

If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please visit:

<http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/studenthandbook/standardsregulations/plagiarism.html>

If you want to learn more about how to properly use citations, you can read the guidelines offered by the Wesleyan library at: <http://libguides.wesleyan.edu/citing>. I prefer that you use the Chicago Manual of Style author-date format. Here is a guide:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Accessibility and Accommodations

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/218, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

Religious/Spiritual Observance Resources:

If you anticipate that your religious/spiritual observance may conflict with academic obligations such as attending class, taking examinations, or submitting assignments, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements. Should you require additional support or guidance, please feel free to reach out to Rabbi David Teva, Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at dleipziger@wesleyan.edu or any of the chaplains in the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/index.html>. For a list of a religious holidays celebrated by members of the Wesleyan community, go to Wesleyan's Multifaith calendar which can be found at: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/orsl/multifaith-calendar.html>.

Title IX Resources:

If trauma inhibits your ability to fully participate in class, please contact Debbie Colucci, Title IX Coordinator, at dcolucci@wesleyan.edu, or your class dean. Additionally, and if you are comfortable, you can work directly with your professor to make reasonable arrangements. If you would like to talk with a confidential resource about all of your options for care and support under Title IX, you can contact Johanna DeBari (SHAPE Office Director) at jdebari@wesleyan.edu.

Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment and does not tolerate identity-based discriminatory harassment and/or sexual

misconduct against students, faculty, staff, trustees, volunteers, and employees of any university contractors/agents. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, identity refers to one's race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression. The Office for Equity and Inclusion serves students, faculty, administrators and develops policies and procedures regarding issues of diversity and equal opportunity/affirmative action. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office for Equity and Inclusion at 860-685-4771.

Other Services and Policies

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [the student code](#).

You are encouraged to take advantage of the many services available to you at Wesleyan. The writing workshop offers remote tutoring – for more information, you can visit <https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/resourcesforstudents/index.html>

For assistance with your research for the case studies, you may also want to schedule a virtual appointment with a librarian. You can do so online at: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/libr/research/prs-form.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

Case study paper 1 due Monday, Jan. 9th by 9 am via Moodle

Tuesday – Jan. 10 What is terrorism, and does it work?

Case study paper 2 due by 9 am via Moodle

MORNING
SESSION

- Ganor, Boaz. 2002. "Defining Terrorism: Is One Man's Terrorist another Man's Freedom Fighter?" *Police Practice and Research*, 3(4): 287-304.
- Hoffman, Bruce. 2018. "[Mail Bombs, Hate Crimes, and the Meaning of Terrorism](#)." *Council on Foreign Relations*, October 30, 2018.
- Congressional Research Service. 2021. "[Domestic Terrorism and the Attack on the U.S. Capitol](#)."

FILM

The Battle of Algiers (1966, Italy/Algeria, 121 min.)

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- Kydd, Andrew and Barbara F. Walter. 2006. "The Strategies of Terrorism." *International Security*, 31(1): 49-80.
- Tures, John. 2018. "[Does terrorism work? We studied 90 groups to get the answer](#)." *The Conversation*, December 19, 2018.

Wednesday – Jan. 11	Individual motivations & suicide terrorism
MORNING SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McCauley, Clark and Sophia Moskalenko. 2008. “Mechanisms of Political Radicalization: Pathways Toward Terrorism.” <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 20 (3): 415-433. • Post, Jerrold, Ehud Sprinzak and Laurita Denny. 2003. “The Terrorists in Their Own Words: Interviews with 35 Incarcerated Middle Eastern Terrorists.” <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 15(1): 171 – 184.
FILM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paradise Now (Palestine, 2005, 90 min.)
AFTERNOON SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hafez, Mohammed. 2006. “Rationality, Culture, and Structure in the Making of Suicide Bombers: A Preliminary Theoretical Synthesis and Illustrative Case Study.” <i>Studies in Conflict and Terrorism</i>, 29: 165-185. • Horowitz, Michael C. 2015. “The Rise and Spread of Suicide Terrorism.” <i>Annual Review of Political Science</i>, v. 18, 69-84. • Pape, Robert. 2010. “It’s the Occupation, Stupid.” <i>Foreign Policy</i>, October 18, 2010.
Thursday – Jan. 12	Organizational dynamics
MORNING SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moghadam, Assaf. 2013. “How Al Qaeda Innovates,” <i>Security Studies</i>, 22(3): 466-497. • Young, Joseph and Laura Dugan. 2014. “Survival of the Fittest: Why Terrorist Groups Endure.” <i>Perspectives on Terrorism</i>, 8 (2): 2-23.
FILM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Baader-Meinhof Complex (2008, Germany, 150 min.)
AFTERNOON SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moghadam, Assaf. 2012. “Failure and Disengagement in the Red Army Faction.” <i>Studies in Conflict and Terrorism</i>, 35(2): 156-181. • Hanshew, Karin. 2012. “‘Sympathy for the Devil?’ The West German Left and the Challenge of Terrorism.” <i>Contemporary European History</i>, 21(4): 511-532.

Friday – Jan. 13	Deradicalization, disengagement and the strategic logic of nonviolence
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MORNING SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Horgan, John. 2009. “How, when and why terrorism ends,” in <i>Walking Away from Terrorism</i>. New York: Routledge. • Altier, Mary Beth et al. 2021. “Returning to the Fight: An Empirical Analysis of Terrorist Reengagement and Recidivism.” <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 33(4): 836-860. • Sageman, Marc. 2021. “On Recidivism: A Commentary on Altier, Boyle, and Horgan.” <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 33(4): 861-867.
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FILM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budrus (2010, Israel/Palestine/USA, 58 min.)
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AFTERNOON SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephan, Maria and Erica Chenoweth. 2008. “Why Civil Resistance Works.” <i>International Security</i>, 33(1): 7 -44.
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Monday – Jan. 16	Religion and Violence
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Case study paper 3 due by 9 am via Moodle

MORNING SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juergensmeyer, Mark. 2004. “Is Religion the Problem?” <i>Hedgehog Review</i>, 6(1). • Creswell, Robyn and Bernard Haykel. 2015. “Battle Lines: Want to understand the jihadis? Read their poetry.” <i>The New Yorker</i> (June 8, 2015).
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FILM	A (1998, Japan, 136 min.)
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AFTERNOON SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saiya, Nilay. 2020. “Confronting Apocalyptic Terrorism: Lessons from France and Japan.” <i>Studies in Conflict and Terrorism</i>, 43(9): 775-795. • Watanabe, Manabu. 1998. “Religion and Violence in Japan Today: A Chronological and Doctrinal Analysis of Aum Shinrikyo.” <i>Terrorism and Political Violence</i>, 10(4): 80-100.
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Tuesday – Jan. 17	Violence in the United States
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Study questions for midterm handed out in class

MORNING SESSION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hoffman, Bruce, Jacob Ware and Ezra Shapiro. 2020. “Assessing the Threat of Incel Violence.” <i>Studies in Conflict and Terrorism</i>, 43(7): 565-587.
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- Cobb, Russell. 2020. "The Fire That Time." In *The Great Oklahoma Swindle: Race, Religion, and Lies in America's Weirdest State*. University of Nebraska Books.

FILM

- Frontline PBS: "Documenting Hate: New American Nazis" (USA, 2018, 54 minutes)

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- Byman, Daniel. 2022. "Assessing the right-wing terror threat in the United States a year after the January 6 insurrection." [Brookings](#).
- Miller-Idris, Cynthia. "America's Most Urgent Threat Now Comes From Within," [The New York Times](#), Jan. 5, 2022.
- Clifford, Bennet and Jon Lewis. 2022. "[This is the Aftermath': Assessing Domestic Violent Extremism One Year After the Capitol Siege](#)." *The George Washington University Program on Extremism*. [This is a long report; **only read executive summary and pages 25-45**]

**Wednesday –
Jan. 18****Leadership decapitation, drones and international law**MORNING
SESSION**IN-CLASS MIDTERM EXAM**

FILM

Eye in the Sky (USA, 2015, 102 min.)

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- Lehrke, Jesse Paul and Rahel Schomaker. 2016. "Kill, Capture or Defend? The Effectiveness of Specific and General Counterterrorism Tactics against the Global Threats of the Post-9/11 Era." *Security Studies*, 25(4): 729-762.
- O'Connell, Mary Ellen. 2012. "Adhering to Law and Values against Terrorism," *Notre Dame Journal of International and Comparative Law* (2012).

**Thursday –
Jan. 19****Asymmetric conflict & counterinsurgency**MORNING
SESSION

- Mack, Andrew. 1975. "Why big nations lose small wars: The politics of asymmetric conflict." *World Politics: A Quarterly Journal of International Relations*.
- The United States Army, [Field Manual 3-24](#), *Counterinsurgency* (The Department of the Army, 2006), **Introduction & Ch. 1**.

FILM

- Restrepo (US, 2010, 93 min.)

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- Jones, Seth. 2008. "The Rise of Afghanistan's Insurgency: State Failure and Jihad." *International Security*, 32(4): 7-40.
- Haass, Richard. 2021. "[America's Withdrawal of Choice](#)," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Aug. 15, 2021.

**Friday –
Jan. 20****Counterterrorism, ethics and human security**MORNING
SESSION

- Lindahl, Sondre. 2017. "A CTS model of counterterrorism" *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 10(3): 523-541.
- Mary Kaldor, Mary Martin and Sabine Selchow. 2007. "Human Security: A New Strategic Narrative for Europe," *International Affairs* 83:2 (2007), 273 – 288.

FILM

- Zero Dark Thirty (USA, 2012, 157 min.)

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. 2014. "Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program." *Read "Foreword" and "Findings and Conclusions" (first 24 pages of the pdf).*
- Jacobson, Adam. 2021. "Back to the Dark Side: Explaining the CIA's Repeated Use of Torture." *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 33 (2):257-270.

**Monday –
Jan. 23****Terrorism, counterterrorism and the way forward**MORNING
SESSION

- Gadarian, Shana Kushner. 2010. "The Politics of Threat: How Terrorism News Shapes Foreign Policy Attitudes." *The Journal of Politics*, 72(2): 469-483.
- Jordan, Jenna, Margaret E. Kosal and Lawrence Rubin. 2016. "The Strategic Illogic of Counterterrorism Policy." *The Washington Quarterly*, 39(4): 181-192.
- "[Cost of the 20-year war on terror: \\$8 trillion and 900,000 deaths](#)" Sept. 1, 2021

AFTERNOON
SESSION

- **SMALL GROUP PRESENTATIONS**

FINAL EXAM – IN CLASS, JANUARY 25TH
(study questions handed out on the last day of class)