Syllabus for the Course
Understanding Terrorism and Terrorists
LSHV-386

Fall 2011

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Georgetown University Room TBD

The purpose of this course is to examine the issue of terrorism by addressing the following questions:

- What perspective of international relations theory is more applicable in today’s international environment—Francis Fukuyama’s end of history or Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations, or Thomas Friedman’s impact of globalization?

- What is a terrorist, and how should terrorism be defined?

- Who are the terrorists, and what motivates a terrorist?

- How do terrorists operate, and what is the anatomy of terrorist attack?

- What is the policy of the United States toward terrorism?

- What is the policy of other countries, and the United Nations, toward terrorism?

- How do countries protect their citizens and homeland from terrorist attacks?

- What international agreements are in force to prevent terrorism?

- What is the future of terrorism?
Course Outline

Week 1: Course introduction.

Week 2: Three perspectives of international relations will be examined. Francis Fukuyama argues the fall of communism and continuing rise in democratic regimes signifies humankind has reached a historical milestone. Samuel Huntington has written civilizations are at odds with each other, and there is a continuing threat of violence arising from renewed conflicts between countries and cultures that base their traditions on religious faith and dogma. Thomas Friedman points out that the globalized flat world fosters creative imagination—unfortunately—is also a friend of al-Qaeda which can create destructive imagination.

Required reading:
Week 3: There are many definitions of terrorism. A number of these definitions will be discussed, both from a domestic and international perspective.

Required reading:
http://www.spotlightonfreedom.com/documents/how_do_we_define_terrorism_(version%20two%202008).pdf
http://chinesejil.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/search?fulltext=Benm+Saul

Week 4: There are scores of terrorist groups. The focus of week 4 will be to identify selected terrorist organizations and their institutional and personal motivations.

Required reading:
Additional resources:
Week 5: The focus of this class will be on two questions—How do terrorists operate? What type of targets do terrorists attack? Although many terrorist groups use violence, some use it more effectively than others. Additionally this session will examine if there are any trends in the level of terrorist violence.

Required Reading:

Additional Resources:

Weeks 6/7: Presentations: Students will provide a 20 minute briefing to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs (represented by the instructor) on terrorism, including the international situation, definitions of terrorism, and a selected terrorist group and their motivations and operations. See rubric # 1 for additional instructions.

Week 8: What was/is the policy of the United States Government toward terrorism? Week 8 will examine the terrorism policies of Presidents Reagan, Clinton, and Bush 43.

Required reading:
Harvey Sicherman. “Winning the Peace” (Orbis, Fall Vol. 38 Issue 4), 523-544.
US Department of State Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, US Counterterrorism Policy” found at http://www.state.gov/s/ct/about/c16570.htm

Additional readings:

Week 9: What is the policy of other countries, and international organizations toward terrorism? Week 9 will examine the stated policy of countries such as the United Kingdom, Israel, and India comparing these policies with US policy toward terrorism.

Research paper proposals are due.

Required Reading:

Week 10: How are governments organized to protect their citizens and infrastructures from terrorist attacks? This session will focus on domestic and international efforts to counter terrorism.

A portion of this class will be devoted to a review of research paper proposals.

Required reading:
Week 11/12: What international agreements are in place to prevent and combat terrorism? There are a number of multilateral conventions related to states' responsibilities for combating terrorism. The United States is party to each of these conventions. This session will focus on each convention and assess their adequacy and the need for additional conventions.

The last thirty minutes of each class will be devoted to a review of research paper proposals.

Required reading:

Week 13: What is the future of terrorism? This session examines the future of terrorist groups, their operations and motivations, and how countries are dealing with this threat.

Required reading:
Student Responsibilities

The course is designed to help students gain insights into terrorism. It considers the international context of the issue, definitions of terrorism, terrorist groups including their motivations and tactics, policies of countries toward terrorism, and the future of the terrorism. After completing this course students should have a background and understanding of terrorism and related issues.

Students are required to complete a research paper of 20 pages, typed, double-spaced on a topic approved by the instructor. Please see listed topics in rubric # 2. This paper is worth 50 % of the student’s final grade. Another 30 % of the final grade is based on the student’s presentation during weeks 6 and 7. The remaining 20 % is based on attendance and participation during class sessions.

The semester will not be spent with the instructor talking at students; instead, the class will learn by discussing, analyzing and evaluating the issues together. Class sessions will be divided into two parts. During the first portion of class I will provide a short lecture on the topic for the week and the readings. During the second portion of the class we will discuss the readings. I will also ask one or two students to present their interpretation of the topic of discussion and the readings. Required readings are listed for each week.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the week’s topic and the required reading.