Course Description

The topic of this seminar is subnational terrorism, considered from a political economic perspective. Practically that means we will take a quantitative approach to the study of terrorism, using the tools of game theory and statistical inference. Though there are no prerequisites, the readings will be heavy in both statistics and game theory, and prior or simultaneous coursework is encouraged. However, we will take the first week of class to discuss/review important concepts from each of statistics and game theory to aid in later productive discussions. Subsequent weeks will focus on different aspects of terrorism, e.g., aggregate and individual determinants of terrorism, mobilization and terror networks, methods of terror and counter-terror and their consequences, and organization of and competition between terror groups. In each week we will consider what we can learn from the existing literature and discuss productive ways to go beyond it with further study. The culminating project requires the student to formulate and ground in the literature a novel research idea that could be the basis of publishable work. Grades will be based on the final project as well as seminar participation, papers, and discussion leadership.

Our tight focus on political economic approaches to subnational terrorism means we will not be able to cover other approaches to the study of terrorism in this course. Two notable aspects of terrorism that will not be covered are state terror and psychological approaches to terrorism. This is not in any way a statement of the relative importance of these two; merely an accommodation to time constraints and methodological approach. And, in the case of state terrorism, the often different dynamics between it and oppositional terrorism, which we will study.

Readings

All readings for the class are listed in the tentative schedule below in the order in which they will be used. Any book chapters or articles not available through Duke’s library or on the Internet will be available via Sakai. Required readings are to be done before class in all cases. Because many of these readings are dense, you should leave yourself time to do them. In some cases, additional recommended readings are listed below each topic on the schedule as well. These are included as a preliminary (and non-exhaustive) guide for further reading on the topic for those who are interested.

Grading

- Participation: 25%. All students are required to have completed the required readings for each week before class begins, and everyone should be prepared to discuss the readings during class. All students should also have read the discussion papers circulated by discussion leaders the day before (see below). This is a seminar and will be treated accordingly. That is to say, we will be discussing the readings; I will not be lecturing except to clarify readings.
and explain their more technical aspects. I expect you to provide evidence that you have
done the readings in a thoughtful and careful manner. After each class meeting I will assign
a participation grade that takes into account the frequency and quality of your contributions.
The following scale will be used for scoring your participation:
A to A-: The student made a very strong contribution to the class. Comments were thought-
ful and constructive.
B+ to B-: The student contributed meaningfully to the course. Comments went beyond
simply repeating the assigned material, but did not demonstrate strong insights.
C+ or lower: The student did not contribute meaningfully. Comments were limited to repeating
the assigned material rather than making connections or extensions, or were inaccurate.
F: The student did not speak in class.

- Discussion leadership: 40%. Each student will be assigned in the first week of class four
articles/chapters to lead between weeks 3 and 14. That student will be the discussion leader
for that article/chapter. A discussion leader has two responsibilities. First, each leader is
responsible for delivering to me via e-mail and Sakai dropbox a 2-3 page paper by noon
Wednesday the week of class. The paper should open with a brief summary of the major
points of the article/chapter s/he was to have read, and then offer additional avenues for
discussion that the leader feels would be productive and interesting to address during the
seminar. Second, the student will then lead discussion during the seminar on that particular
article/chapter. Roughly a half hour total will be devoted to each article/chapter each week.
The depth of preparation evinced in these papers, particularly in the discussion questions,
along with the leading of the seminar itself, will determine the student’s grade. All four
leadership opportunities will count equally.

- Final paper: 35%. The final paper will be due by noon one week after the last day of class. No
late papers will be accepted. Papers should be both e-mailed to me and placed in the dropbox
on Sakai. Acceptable formats include pdf and doc/docx (i.e. Acrobat and Word); it is your
responsibility to ensure that the document can be opened. Papers should be double-spaced,
with one inch margins and 12 point font, and be no more (or much less than) 15 pages. I
will provide more instruction as to the content of the papers as the semester goes on, but
in general each paper needs to do a few things: 1) identify a real-world problem relating to
terrorism that is of substantive interest; 2) set the problem in the literature we have read,
explaining who has looked at it or similar problems before and what they have found; 3)
propose a theory about the problem (either how to solve it or why it occurs, or both); and
4) apply the approach of this class to propose ways to study (quantitatively and/or formally)
the problem further in order to come to a reasoned policy conclusion.

Tentative Schedule of Readings (Subject to Change with Advance Notice):

Preliminaries

Week 1: August 28 — A Crash Course in Quantitative and Formal Analysis
REQUIRED READING:
Week 2: No Class Sep 4, Day/Time TBD — Definitions, Progress, and Problems

REQUIRED READING:

RECOMMENDED READING:


**Who Joins?: Mobilization, Recruitment, and Networks**

**Week 3: Sep 11 — Economics, Democracy, and Repression I**

**Required Reading:**


**Recommended Reading:**


**Week 4: Sep 18 — Economics, Democracy, and Repression II**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**


**Week 5: Sep 25 — Impact of Terrorism**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**


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**Week 6: Oct 2 — Terror Networks and the Impact of Religion**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**


**ATTACK AND DEFENSE: METHODS OF TERROR AND COUNTER-TERROR**

**Week 7: Oct 9 — Terror Strategies I**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**


**Week 8: Oct 16 — Terror Strategies II**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**


**Week 9: Oct 23 — Suicide Terror**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**Responses to Pape:**


RECOMMENDED READING:

Week 10: Oct 30 — Counter-terror: Target Defense and Information
REQUIRED READING:

RECOMMENDED READING:
**Week 11: Nov 6 — Negotiations, Credible Commitment and Costly Signaling**

**Required reading:**


**Recommended reading:**


**Organization, Finance, and Competition**

**Week 12: Nov 13 — Finance and Counter-finance**

**Required reading:**

RECOMMENDED READING:

Week 13: Nov 20 — Organizational Structure

REQUIRED READING:

Primary Sources:
Harmony Documents: “Al-Qa’ida Goals and Structure” and “Employment Contract.” Available at [http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq_pdf.asp](http://ctc.usma.edu/aq/aq_pdf.asp). [There are many other such documents as well for your perusal.]
Twomey, “Staff Report” (course website).

RECOMMENDED READING:


**Week 14: Dec 4 — Competition and Factionalization**

**REQUIRED READING:**


**RECOMMENDED READING:**