TERRORISM AND COUNTERTERRORISM

Lecture: Tues., 6:20-8:20
Office Hrs: Tues., 8:30-9:30 and by appointment

Professor Stuart Gottlieb
smg13@nyu.edu

This is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.

— Winston Churchill

Description
This course examines the origins and evolution of modern terrorism, challenges posed by terrorist groups to states and to the international system, and strategies employed to confront and combat terrorism. We assess a wide variety of terrorist organizations, and explore the psychological, socioeconomic, political, and religious causes of terrorist violence past and present. We also analyze the strengths and weaknesses of various counterterrorism strategies, from the point of view of efficacy as well as ethics, and look into ways in which the new threat of global terrorism might impact the healthy functioning of democratic states.

The course is divided into two parts. Part I focuses on the terrorist threat, including the nature, roots, objectives, tactics, and organization of terrorism and terrorist groups. Part II addresses the issue of counterterrorism, including recent American efforts to combat terrorism, the strengths and weaknesses of counterterrorist tools and instruments, the issue of civil liberties and democratic values in confronting terrorism, and international strategies and tactics.

Requirements
Grading is based on the results of an optional take-home midterm exam (25%); a backgrounder memorandum (25%); and a cumulative take-home final exam (50% or 75%). Regular attendance and class participation may also factor into your final grade. The midterm questions, covering the first seven weeks of the semester, will be handed out at the end of class on March 10, and due the beginning of class on March 24. The memo assignments will be handed out on April 14 and due in class on April 21. The final exam will be handed out on the last day of class (May 6) and due in my mailbox by close of business on Thursday, May 12.

Backgrounder Memorandum
On April 14, each student will be randomly assigned a terrorist group from the State Department’s list of Designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and charged with providing a detailed memorandum (2-4 pages, single-spaced) to the Assistant to the President of the United States for National Security Affairs (National Security Adviser) prior to his/her official trip to the nation/region where the group operates. Each memorandum must cover the following: 1) a concise history of the terrorist organization; 2) an explanation of its primary grievance(s); 3) its goals; 4) its primary tactics and strategies used to achieve those goals, and the utility thereof; 5) the ability of its target(s) to effectively confront/combat the organization; and 6) brief suggestions the National Security Adviser should offer on how to best bring about an end to the violence.
**Required Readings**
The following texts are available at the NYU Bookstore, as well as on reserve at the library. All other required readings are available on the Classes server.


**Course Outline and Dates of Importance**

Week 1 (1/27): Introduction

Week 2 (2/3): Defining Terrorism; Active Terrorist Groups

Week 3 (2/10): The Evolution of Terrorism I *Movie: Battle of Algiers*

Week 4 (2/17): The Evolution of Terrorism II

Week 5 (2/24): Root Causes, Motivations, and Justifications; Logic of “Sacred Terror”

Week 6 (3/3): Al Qaeda Before 9/11

Week 7 (3/10): Al Qaeda After 9/11 *Movie: Al Qaeda’s New Front* *MT exam handed out*

Week 8 (3/24): The New Tools of Terrorism I *MT exam due in class*

Week 9 (3/31): The New Tools of Terrorism II

Week 10 (4/7): Counterterrorism Pre-9/11

Week 11 (4/14): Counterterrorism Post-9/11 *Terrorist groups assigned for memo*

Week 12 (4/21): Democratic Values and Counterterrorism *Memos due in class*

Week 13 (4/28): Global Strategies and Challenges *Movie: Dirty War*

Week 14 (5/5): The Road Ahead *Final exam handout*

Final Exams due in my mailbox by 5pm on Tuesday, May 12.
PART I. THE TERRORIST THREAT

Week 1
Introduction

Week 2
Lecture
Defining Terrorism
Active Terrorist Organizations

Readings [~110 pp.]
Bruce Hoffman, Inside Terrorism (Columbia University Press, 2006), Ch. 1, pp. 1-41.
Eqbal Ahmad, Terrorism: Theirs and Ours (Seven Stories Press, 2001), pp. 11-26.

Week 3
Lecture
The Evolution of Terrorism I
Traditional Terrorism: Ideological, Ethno/Separatist, Nationalistic
Movie: The Battle of Algiers (1965)

Readings [~130 pp.]
Week 4
Lecture

The Evolution of Terrorism II
The Modern Variant: Global Terrorism

Readings (~135 pp.)
Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 3, “The Internationalization of Terrorism,” pp. 63-80.
Louise Richardson, “Global Rebels,” Harvard International Review (Fall 1998), pp. 52-56.

Week 5
Lecture

Root Causes, Motivations, and Justifications
The Logic of “Sacred Terror”

Readings (~255 pp.)
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 2, “Does Poverty Serve as a Root Cause of Terrorism?” (James Piazza: No; Karin von Hippel: Yes), pp. 35-68.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 3, “Can Terrorism Ever Be Justified?” (Tamar Meisels: No; Ted Honderich: Yes), pp. 69-100.

Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 4, “Religion and Terrorism,” pp. 81-130.
Samuel Huntington, “Clash of Civilizations?” Foreign Affairs (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49. (Skim)
Week 6  
Lecture  
*Al Qaeda Before 9/11: While America Slept*

**Readings**  
[-190 pp.]  

Week 7  
Lecture  
*Al Qaeda After 9/11: The Global Network and Beyond*  
Movie: *Al Qaeda’s New Front*  
*Midterm handed out*

**Readings**  
[-100 pp.]  
Department of State, *Country Reports 2013*, Ch. 1, “Strategic Assessment.”  
Jack Jenkins, “The Book That Really Explains ISIS (Hint: It’s Not the Qur’an),” *ThinkProgress*, September 10, 2014. (Skim manuscript)  
Letter from Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi on al-Qaeda strategy, July 9, 2005.  

Week 8  
Lecture  
*The New Tools of Terrorism I*  
The Quest for Catastrophic Weapons  
*Midterm due in class*

**Readings**  
[-170 pp.]  
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 6, “Is Nuclear Terrorism a Real Threat?” (Matthew Bunn: Yes; Susan Martin: No), pp. 172-208.


http://www.carnegieendowment.org/npp/terrorism.cfm


Week 9
Lecture
The New Tools of Terrorism II
Emerging Methods, Strategies, and Tactics

Readings [-160 pp.]


Hoffman, Inside Terrorism, Ch. 5, “Suicide Terrorism,” pp. 131-171.

Ariel Merari, “The Readiness to Kill and Die: Suicidal Terrorism in the Middle East,” in Reich, ed., Origins of Terrorism, pp. 192-207.


Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 5, “Is Suicide Terrorism an Effective Tactic?” (Gordon McCormick and Lindsay Fritz: Yes; Max Abrahms: No), pp. 136-171.


PART II. COMBATING THE TERRORIST THREAT

Week 10
Lecture
The State of Counterterrorism: Pre-9/11

Readings (~185 pp.)
Report from the National Commission on Terrorism, “Countering the Changing Threat of International Terrorism,” June 2000. (Skim)
http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/commission.html

Week 11
Lecture
Wake-Up Calls and Shifting Sands: Counterterrorism Post-9/11 *Terrorist groups assigned*

Readings (~180 pp.)
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 7, “Counterterrorism Strategies: Do We Need Bombs over Bridges?” (Brigitte Nacos: No; Michael Rubin: Yes), pp. 209-242.
Week 12
Lecture
Democratic Values and Counterterrorism: Balancing Liberty and Security

*Memos due*

Readings (~130)
Alberto Gonzales and Robert Mueller, testimony on Patriot Act and FISA before Senate Intelligence Committee, April 27, 2005
Barack Obama, Remarks at the National Archives, May, 21, 2009.
Dick Cheney, Remarks at the American Enterprise Institute, May 21, 2009.
Stuart Gottlieb, “Staying the Course: Why President Obama’s antiterror policies look so much like George W. Bush’s,” American Lawyer (November 2010).
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 10, “Is an Outright Ban the Best Way to Eliminate or Constrain Torture?” (Michael Posner: Yes; Alan Dershowitz: No), pp. 312-344.

Week 13
Lecture
Global Strategies and Challenges
Movie: Dirty War

Readings (~160 pp.)
Gunaratna, Inside Al Qaeda, pp. 294-322.
Department of State, Country Reports 2013, Ch. 5 “Terrorist Safe Havens” (skim the rest). 9/11 Commission Report, Ch. 12.
George W. Bush, speech before the National Endowment for Democracy, Nov. 6, 2003.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 8, “Can Spreading Democracy Help Defeat Terrorism?” (Gregory Gause: No; Jennifer Windsor: Yes), pp. 243-275.
Gottlieb, Debating Terrorism, Ch. 9, “Can International Organizations Make a Difference in Fighting Terrorism?” (Zachary Shirkey: No; Bruce Cronin: Yes), pp. 276-311.


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**Week 14**

**Lecture**

*The Road Ahead*

*Final exam handed out*

**Readings** [~45 pp.]


