

Political Science 5372:
Extremism and Political Violence

Spring 2023
Online
CRN: 21626
Credit Hours: 3

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Office Hours: Every MWF, 12:00pm- 1:00pm. Or by appointment, in person and/or Zoom.

Note on political events/changes or personal crises: With events over the last few months, such as the attacks against the rights of LGBT people and pregnant individuals, and the increasingly public and violent expressions of racism and bigotry by individuals and governments, I understand that many of you may be under significantly higher amounts of stress/fear than during a normal semester. I also understand that you might need breaks from class to take care of your own mental health, family members, friends, or community.

Students are always welcome to get in touch with me if they want to talk or want assistance accessing support resources. I promise a safe, judgement free, and confidential environment. I am also happy to provide personal contact mechanisms if students want further privacy or the situation warrants that level of privacy. This extends to adjustments. I will work with anyone as much as I can to make sure you have a safe semester, feel heard, and be able to succeed during the semester.

Please note that as faculty, I am a mandatory Title IX reporter so if you reach out to me with experiences of harassment (sexual, racial, religious, etc) I will need to give your name and student email address to the Title IX office. They are also bound by confidentiality, and simply reach out to ask whether they can provide additional support.

Course Description

What makes a terrorist willing to carry out a suicide bombing? Are mass shooters in the US just “mentally ill?” How does a weird conspiracy group like Qanon escalate to the point where members are storming the Capitol?

This course focuses on these questions, and others like them in the social scientific study of political violence. We will focus on the scientific explanations developed for

the structure and behavior of insurgencies and terrorist networks, the causes of genocide and mass killings, and the effects of government's responses to these events.

After this class you will understand the major factors that influence genocide, terrorism, and civil war as well as a sense of where the social science literature sits on these topics. While we will reference specific historic and current events throughout the course, this is not a history class. We will focus on the underlying factors that drive these events as understood by the published research.

We will start the semester with a brief overview of political violence as a whole and the social scientific method. Then we will discuss political violence in two broad categories. First, we will look at state generated violence—where governments use force against other governments and their populations. Second, we will look at the varieties of non-state violence—where at least one of the participants of political violence is a private individual or non-governmental group.

Course Material

There are no required textbooks for this course. Instead, readings for each week will be posted as PDFs to the course Blackboard page. Students are responsible for reading the assigned articles during the week they are assigned.

Readings will be accompanied each week by posted outlines that are to be guides to the more complex readings. There will also be brief recordings available to guide thinking for the week.

Each week, you will see a new folder appear in the “Weekly Assignments” section of the course Blackboard page. That folder will have all of the reading assignments you will need for the week, as well as directions and links to the week's assignments.

Assignments

Analysis Memo: 5 points each

Writing is an essential skill in any profession. In addition to helping you interpret the readings for each week, these assignments are designed to help you practice your analytic writing in a way that allows me to give you regular feedback. Ideally, you should do one of these for each reading, since it will allow you to condense the important points of each article. **You only need to turn in one memo of an article of your choice each week.** For example, if there are five articles assigned for the week, you only need to upload one memo to the Blackboard assignment.

Each memo should include:

- 1) The name of the selected reading (i. e. an article, book or a book chapter)
- 2) Primary research question(s) from the readings

- 3) Brief statement of the prior research on the topic
- 4) Existing research gap that the article or book intends to fill
- 5) Major hypotheses and a short summary of the authors' theory
- 6) Methodologies utilized in the study
- 7) Finding(s)
- 8) Relationship between the finding(s) and the research question
- 9) Possible avenues for future research on the topic.

Memos are due each Sunday at 11:59pm.

Discussion Board: 2 points each

Normally, graduate seminars involve meeting once a week with the instructor so that everyone can discuss the week's content. Since this is an online class, and you are all busy, posting in weekly discussion boards will be essential to interacting with each other and with me.

Each week, I will post a few guiding questions for the week, which you will need to answer yourselves. They will ask you to apply the readings to a real world situation, ask about potential problems in our understanding of political violence, or otherwise ask you to expand upon what you read with your own thoughts. You must also make at least one substantive response to another student's post—adding more detail, bringing up a related point, etc.

Posts must be completed by 11:59pm on the Sunday after which they are assigned.

Final Case Study: 10 points

We will cover all kinds of politically motivated violence in this class. It will be essential that you can apply what you've learned in this class to real world events of political violence—and you will probably be doing some version of this in your future careers.

Over the course of the semester, you will write a 3-5 page case study on a chosen event or campaign of political violence. You'll need to go into the causes and consequences of your event and describe how our theories of political violence help to explain it (or fail to explain it). More detail will be provided later in the semester.

Grading Scale

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: Below 60

Blackboard

All communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and

University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

Information and University Policies

Academic Dishonesty:

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/

Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: "a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20...." A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

Students with Disabilities Policy:

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail disability@shsu.edu). They should then make arrangements with their

individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

Copyright on Lecture and Course Materials

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Emergencies, Crises, and Mental Health

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases, these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences. Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want to neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis.

Class Outline, Schedule

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class, through email, and on the course Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

Week 1: 1/17-1/20

Course Introduction

Week 2: 1/23-1/27

How do we Define Political Violence?

Week 3: 1/30-2/3

Studying Political Violence Scientifically

Week 4: 2/6-2/10

State Violence: Repression

Week 5: 2/13-2/17

State Violence: Non-Violent Repression

Week 6: 2/20-2/24

State Violence: Genocide and Mass Killing

Week 7: 2/27-3/3

State **and** Nonstate Violence: Civil Wars

Week 8: 3/6-3/10

Non-State Violence: Definitions of Terrorism and its Organization

Week 9: 3/13-3/17

No Class, Spring Break

Week 10: 3/20-3/24

Non-state Violence: General Causes of Terrorism

Week 11: 3/27-3/31

Non-State Violence: Who Becomes a Terrorist

Week 12: 4/3-4/7

Non-state Violence: Female Participation in Terrorism

Week 13: 4/10-4/14

Wartime Sexual Violence

Week 14: 4/17-4/21

Ethnic/Racially Motivated Violence

Week 15: 4/24-4/28

Violence Causing Violence

Week 16: 5/1-5/5

Transitional Justice: Recovering from Violence

Friday, May 5, Study Day

Week 17: 5/8-5/11

Finals Week

Case Study and all missing work due at 11:59pm on Thursday, May 11