

GOV 360S: Terrorism and Counterterrorism, Spring 2025, 38485

Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin

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1 Instructor Information

Professor Michael Findley

Phone: 512.749.3815

Email: mikefindley@utexas.edu

Office: BAT 3.102

Office hours: Tues 9:30–12:30 & by appt

Office hours signup: [\[link here\]](#)Findley zoom: [\[link here\]](#)

Class location: CAL 100

Class day/time: MW 8:30–10:00

TA: Kylie Smith, BAT 1.118

TA zoom: [\[TBA\]](#)

TA office hours: TBA

2 Course Overview, Format, and Objectives

This course introduces the topic of terrorism and addresses the core ideas in studies of terrorism. We examine in detail the primary causes of terrorist acts committed both by dissidents and governments as well as counterterrorist measures taken by states and international organizations. We also focus on common misunderstandings of terrorism, such as the idea that terrorism is a group ideology or group characteristic rather than a political act. Further, we move beyond a narrow focus on Islamic terrorism, which seems to dominate the public discourse, and consider many varieties of terrorism over time and throughout the world.

The course will enable students to develop an understanding of what terrorism is, what its causes are, and how it can be addressed. In addition to considering various theoretical approaches, we will discuss a number of instances of terrorist acts and campaigns. A research paper on a terrorist campaign of your choice will allow you to gain an even deeper perspective on terrorist behavior. These activities and assignments should help you (1) gain a knowledge of countries and violence, theoretically and factually, (2) write professional research papers, (3) communicate effectively in oral presentations, and (4) think critically, analytically, and synthetically.

I hope that our sessions will be engaging, informative, and participatory. I eschew a strict lecture format. Instead, we will engage in a variety of activities including lectures, personal writing exercises, partner and group work, class discussions, video clips, demonstrations, problem-solving activities, and other critical thinking exercises. I value and will solicit your input on class activities both at the beginning of the semester as well as around the midterm. I will make every reasonable effort to incorporate these ideas in the classroom.

3 Requirements

3.1 Required Readings

One book is required for purchase and is listed below. You may use the physical or digital version as you prefer. Other articles will be placed on Canvas and you will also be responsible for them. Please note that I will alter the readings from time to time including adding, dropping, and reorganizing. I will give you advance notice when this is to take place.

- Martin, Gus. 2024. *Understanding Terrorism: Challenges, Perspectives, and Issues*. 8th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. (physical or digital)

You should also plan to follow world news on a regular basis by reading, for examples, the *BBC* or *New York Times*.

3.2 Syllabus

Each of you needs to confirm (on Canvas) that you have read through the syllabus and that you understand all that is required of you. This is required and you must complete it by January 22.

3.3 Attendance and Participation

Attendance and participation are worth 15% of your grade and will be evaluated based on pop quizzes, short writing assignments, and in-class comments. You need to complete the assigned readings *by the date* they appear in the syllabus. Please read critically and be prepared to comment on the readings in class.

3.4 Assignment

Students are required to complete one writing assignment. It requires you to examine some data on terrorism to understand trends over time as well as some important, but under appreciated, facts about terrorism. This paper can be no more than 7 pages in length (single-spaced; 1-in margins; 12pt font; not including tables/figures/references. The assignment is worth 15% of your grade and due on April 16.

For this assignment, you need to conduct some research on current trends in terrorism. To do this, you need to use a data set and do some very basic data analysis on global terrorism. I will post the data set on Canvas. For the assignment, you need to obtain the following information from the data:

1. How is terrorism defined and measured in the data set?
2. How many terrorist events are there (total) in the data set?
3. Which country (countries) have the fewest events; which have the most; and what is the average?
4. What is the average number of deaths per terrorist event?
5. What is the most common terrorist target?

Once you obtain these specific pieces of information, then I would like you to learn three other patterns or trends about terrorism in the world. You can choose other trends yourself, so long as they are not isolated facts. You should report the results of your data searches both in brief tables/figures as well as in the text. You should talk about each result and discuss what you thought about the trend prior to seeing the data, what your impressions are now that you have examined the trends, and why you think the trend exists. Finally, please identify three possible *causal* research questions that you could address with this dataset.

The TA and I are happy to provide initial feedback on the direction of the paper if you get it to us far enough in advance. If you turn in any rough draft less than a week in advance, we will not look at it.

The assignment is worth 15% of your final grade and is due on April 16.

3.5 Presentation

In addition to the writing assignment, you will also give an eight-minute oral presentation with other members of the class. You will present on a specific actor/movement using terrorism or on an event, highlighting both the descriptive background as well as analytical insights based on the reading materials from class. You must turn in a detailed outline/paper (3–4 pages) summarizing your presentation. *This is due at least two days prior to your presentation.* You will be graded on the paper, the presentation, and on a peer evaluation. This assignment is worth 15% of your grade.

1. Presentation Dates: Sign up for a presentation date sometime during the semester.
2. Candidate terrorist groups/movements/events: See the Global Terrorism Database [Link Here] for ideas.
3. Substance of the presentation:
 - Describe the background to the actor/event (briefly!).
 - Analyze how the current class material applies.
 - Discuss other potential explanations outside of what the direct readings discuss.
 - Pose questions to the class for discussion.
4. Logistics
 - Eight-minute presentation followed by four minutes of class discussion. I will enforce the time limits.
 - Prepare a total of five slides (Suggested slides: background/context, group, tactics, resolution/counterinsurgency strategy, and relation to course material).
 - Distribute a handout (digitally on Canvas).
 - Turn in 3–4 page outline/paper to me ahead of time.
 - Afterwards (within 48 hours), independently post a peer evaluation of your group to Canvas.
 - The presentation is worth 15% of your grade.

3.6 Exams

The midterm and final exams account for 55% of your final grade (25% for the midterm and 30% for the final). Both exams will consist of multiple choice and short and long essays. Closer to the exam dates, I will hand out more detailed information about preparing for, and taking, the exams. The exams will take place in class (Mar 5 & Apr 28) and **you must bring a blank blue essay book**, which can be purchased at the University Co-op.

3.7 Schedule of Important Dates

Date	Assignment	Time	% of Grade
Jan 22	Confirm (on Canvas) syllabus understanding		Req.
Mar 5	Midterm Exam	In Class	25%
Apr 16	Writing Assignment	Canvas	15%
Apr 28	Final Exam	In Class	30%
	Attendance/Participation	In Class	15%
	Oral Presentation	In Class	15%

4 Course Policies

4.1 Make-up Exams and Assignment

No make-up exams or quizzes will be given unless either prior consent is obtained from the instructor or a valid excuse is obtained according to university guidelines. I will consent to give makeup exams only in the case of a documented emergency or some other commensurate event.

Papers arriving late (i.e., later than 5 minutes into the class period) will be subject to a 1/3 grade reduction. For each successive late day, your grade will be reduced by 1/3 each day (i.e., an *A* will be lowered to an *A-* on the first day late, an *A-* to a *B+* on the second day late, and so on).

4.2 Assignment of Grades

Grades are assigned on the following scale: *A* = 94–100; *A-* = 90–93; *B+* = 87–89; *B* = 84–86; *B-* = 80–83;...*F* = 63 or lower. If you have a complaint about how your exam (or paper) was graded, I am happy to take a second look. You must type a formal appeal addressing the problem and explain clearly what you originally wrote, why you wrote it, and how you think your original response correctly answered the original question. Additionally, you must turn in the original exam (or paper) along with your typed appeal.

4.3 Online Resources

The syllabus, all grades, paper topics, lecture outlines, and more will be posted on Canvas. Although the lecture outlines will be posted here, do not assume that this exempts you from taking notes in class. The outlines will facilitate your note taking, but will not provide sufficient detail from which to study for exams.

4.4 Academic Integrity

UT students should seek to be totally honest in their dealings with others. They should complete their own work and be evaluated based upon that work. They should avoid academic dishonesty and misconduct in all its forms, including plagiarism, fabrication or falsification, cheating, and other academic misconduct. Students are expected not only to be honest but also to assist other students in fulfilling their commitment to be honest.

While students should make a general commitment to proper academic conduct, there are still specific skills most students need to master over time in order to correctly cite sources, especially in the age of the internet, as well as deal with the stress and strain of college life without resorting

to cheating. Please know that as your professor I will notice instances of cheating on exams or plagiarizing on papers.

Writing submitted for credit at UT must consist of the student's own ideas presented in sentences and paragraphs of his or her own construction. The work of other writers or speakers may be included when appropriate (as in a research paper or book review), but such material must support the student's own work (not substitute for it) and must be clearly identified by appropriate introduction and punctuation and by footnoting or other standard referencing.

The substitution of another person's work for the student's own or the inclusion of another person's work without adequate acknowledgment (whether done intentionally or not) is known as plagiarism. It is a violation of academic, ethical, and legal standards and can result in a failing grade not only for the paper but also for the course in which the paper is written. In extreme cases, it can justify expulsion from the University. Because of the seriousness of the possible consequences, students who wonder if their papers are within these guidelines should visit a writing lab or consult a faculty member who specializes in the teaching of writing or who specializes in the subject discussed in the paper. Useful books to consult on the topic include the current *Harbrace College Handbook*, the *MLA Handbook*, and James D. Lester's *Writing Research Papers*.

Please also see the University Honor Code site for more information at:
[Link here].

4.5 Classroom Civility

Regrettably, a handful of students occasionally demonstrate insensitivity to other students and to instructors by disrupting classes unnecessarily. Arriving late for class, reading newspapers in class, packing up bags prior to the end of class, and cell phone use are all disruptive activities.

Browsing the internet, checking email, and playing games on laptops are also inappropriate in class because you should be listening and participating. Certainly, taking notes on a laptop is appropriate, but do not waste your time or mine by getting distracted by other activities on the web. In calculating the attendance and participation grades I will take into account whether you spent your time engaged in the discussion/lecture or whether you were distracted with other activities.

Moreover, I will not tolerate incivility of one opinion to another. It is exciting and healthy to exchange a diversity of opinions, but in no case should anyone demean another because of his or her viewpoint. If you have any questions about what classroom civility entails, please contact me.

4.6 Sharing

No materials used in this class, including, but not limited to, lecture hand-outs, videos, assessments (quizzes, exams, papers, projects, homework assignments), in-class materials, review sheets, and additional problem sets, may be shared online or with anyone outside of the class without my explicit, written permission. Unauthorized sharing of materials may facilitate cheating. The University is aware of the sites used for sharing materials, and any materials found online that are associated with you, or any suspected unauthorized sharing of materials, will be reported to [Student Conduct and Academic Integrity] in the Office of the Dean of Students. These reports can result in initiation of the student conduct process and include charge(s) for academic misconduct, potentially resulting in sanctions, including a grade impact.

4.7 Sensitive Content

This is a course on terrorism, which connects to a broader variety of forms of violence. As such, the content and discussion will necessarily engage with sensitive material in each class session, all the readings, and in the assignments. Those topics may include the following: violence, kidnapping and abduction, sexual assault, abuse, racism, ethnic discrimination, religious discrimination, and sexism. Much of the material is emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage. Some content may be particularly sensitive. Because I am not a mental health professional I do not understand all possible conditions that could be triggered, so if I need to be aware of any personal circumstances, please provide an SSD accommodations letter and I will be happy to adjust as possible. To the full extent possible, I will provide alternative readings, assignments, or discussion opportunities to adequately accommodate. More generally, I will do my best to make space for thoughtful, respectful, and meaningful discussion of difficult content each class session, while balancing the weightiness of the topics, including when possible advance notice of material that is more sensitive than usual for a course on violence. Students with concerns related to these topics may wish and are encouraged to consult the UT Counseling and Mental Health Center: <https://cmhc.utexas.edu>, or another organization that provides suitable support. (Some of this material adapted from <https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/inclusive-teaching/>).

4.8 Other Policies

Access: The university is committed to creating an accessible and inclusive learning environment consistent with university policy and federal and state law. Please let me know if you experience any barriers to learning so I can work with you to ensure you have equal opportunity to participate fully in this course. If you are a student with a disability, or think you may have a disability, and need accommodations please contact Disability and Access (D&A). Please refer to D&A's website for contact and more information: [Disability & Access]. If you are already registered with D&A, please deliver your Accommodation Letter to me as early as possible in the semester so we can discuss your approved accommodations and needs in this course.

Religious Holidays: By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, an examination, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Emergencies: Please also see the following recommendations regarding emergency evacuation from the Office of Campus Safety and Security, 512-471-5767, [Link Here]. 1. Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside. 2. Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building. 3. Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class. 4. In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors. 5. Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office. 6. Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL): 512-232-5050. 7. Link to information regarding emergency evacuation routes and emergency procedures can be found at: www.utexas.edu/emergency.

Family: I am not aware of an official university policy on children in the classroom. The following is an attempt to insure family friendliness while also maintaining a proper learning environment. [I borrowed heavily and adapted these policies from Melissa Cheyney's syllabus. Link

here] 1. All exclusively breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary. 2. For older children and babies, unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable. 3. I ask that all students work to create a welcoming and fully inclusive environment. 4. In all cases where babies and children come to class, please sit close to the door so that if your little one needs special attention and is disrupting learning for others' students, you may step outside until their need has been met. For my part, I will work with you should you need to step out so that you can remain caught up. 5. Finally, often the largest barrier to completing your coursework once you become a parent is the tiredness many parents feel in the evening once children have finally gone to sleep. While I maintain the same high expectations for all students in my class regardless of parenting status, I am happy to problem-solve with you in a way that helps you feel supported as you strive for school-parenting balance.

5 Tentative Course and Reading Schedule

5.1 Jan 13: Syllabus and Introduction

- “What the New Orleans attack tells us about terrorism in 2025” (Canvas)
- Global Terrorism Index 2024 (Read strategically; Canvas)

5.2 Jan 15, 22, & 27: Conceptualizing & Measuring Terrorism

- Martin: 1–9; Chp 2
- Hoffman 2006: “Defining Terrorism” & “End of Empire / Origins of Contemporary Terrorism” Pp. 1–3; 20–41 (Canvas)
- Moore 2015: “Tilting at a Windmill” Pp. 356–369 (Canvas)
- Young 2019: “Measuring Terrorism” Pp. 323–345 (Canvas)

5.3 Jan 29: History of Terrorism

- Martin: Pg 10–19
- Hoffman 2006: “Defining Terrorism” & “End of Empire / Origins of Contemporary Terrorism” & “Internationalization” Pp. 3–20; 43–80 (Canvas)
- Rapaport 2004: “Four Waves of Modern Terrorism” Pp. 46–73 (Canvas)

5.4 Feb 3 & 5: Broad Causes of Terrorism

- Martin: Chp 3
- Kydd and Walter 2006: “Strategies of Terrorism” Pp. 49–79 (Canvas)
- Victoroff 2005: “The Mind of the Terrorist” Pp. 3–42 (Canvas)
- Bacon 2018: “Is the Enemy of My Enemy...” Pp. 345–378 (Canvas)

5.5 Feb 10 & 12: State (-Sponsored) Terrorism

- Martin: Chp 4
- Claridge 1996: “State Terrorism?” Pp. 47–63 (Canvas)
- Byman 2022: “Understanding, and Misunderstanding,…” Pp. 1031–1049 (Canvas)

5.6 Feb 17 & 19: Dissident Terrorism

- Martin: Chp 5
- Gaibullov & Sandler 2019: “What Have We Learned Since 9/11” Pp. 275–328 (Canvas)

5.7 Feb 24 & 26: Religious & Nationalist Terrorism

- Martin: Chp 6
- Lahoud 2021: “Bin Laden’s Catastrophic Success…” (Canvas)

5.8 Mar 5: Midterm Exam**5.9 Mar 10 & Mar 12: Ideological Terrorism**

- Martin: Chp 7
- Miller-Idriss 2021: “From 9/11 to 1/6…” (Canvas)

5.10 Mar 17 & 19: Spring Break – No Class**5.11 Mar 24: Wars and International Terrorism**

- Martin: Chp 8
- Findley and Young, “Terrorism and Civil War” Pp. 285–305 (Canvas)
- Fortna 2015: “Do Terrorists Win?” Pp. 519–556 (Canvas)

5.12 Mar 26: Gender and Criminality

- Martin: Chp 9
- Gentry 2019: “Women and Terrorism” Pp. 414–428 (Canvas)
- Lessing 2019: “Brazil’s prison gangs are launching…” (Canvas)

5.13 Mar 31 & Apr 2: Operations & Media

- Martin: Chp 10 & 11
- Horowitz Et Al 2018: “Tactical Diversity in Militant Violence” Pp. 139–171 (Canvas)
- Baradaran Et Al (2013): “Does International Law Matter?” Pp. 477–536 (Canvas)
- Kearns Et Al 2019: “Why Do Some Terrorist Attacks Receive More Media Attention…” Pp. 985–1022 (Canvas)

5.14 Apr 7, 9, 14, & 16: Hostage Crisis Simulation**5.15 Apr 21 & 23: Counterterrorism**

- Martin: Chp 13
- Monaco 2017: “Preventing the Next Attack...” (Canvas)
- Ackerman 2021: “Winning Ugly...” (Canvas)
- Byman 2017: “How to Hunt a Lone Wolf...” (Canvas)

5.16 Apr 23: American Case & Future of Terrorism

- Martin: Chp 12 (read strategically) & 14 (read strategically)
- Martin: Chp 15 (read strategically)

5.17 Final Exam — Apr 28 (in class)