Diaspora Politics and Transnational Political Violence

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Fall Term
TU/TH 13.30 – 15.10

COURSE DESCRIPTION

We live in an ‘Age of Terror.’ The World Trade Center, Madrid Rail, and London Transport bombings of 2001, 2004, and 2005 respectively ushered in a new era of international political violence that prescribes both the practices and discourses of contemporary global politics. But the present day ‘Age of Terror’ is far from being the first, or even necessarily most formative, epoch of terrorism of the last two centuries. Since the birth of modern terrorism in the mid-nineteenth century, political violence has been a continuous presence in the global political landscape, from the anarchists and nationalists of the pre-World War I era to the state-sponsored terror of the interwar period to the anti-colonial struggles of the immediate post-World War II age to the militant leftists of the Cold War and finally to the terrorism of the present day.

One critical but mostly overlooked aspect of both contemporary and historical political violence is the role diaspora communities have played in the planning, organization, financing, and execution of acts of terror. Members of the American Irish, West German Croat, Canadian Tamil, and British Muslim diasporas—to provide just a sample—have all been powerful agents in the terrorist activities perpetrated in the name of their national and religious communities. This course focuses on the development of extremist politics within diaspora populations and the conditions that lead them to embrace terrorism as an acceptable form of political expression. At its core, the course is concerned with the discourses and practices of radicalization: the ways in which both individuals and groups who engage in terrorism construct a particular image of the world to justify their actions. The course will help the student learn to think critically about how and why terrorism has come to play such an integral role in diaspora politics historically and the consequences this development has had on contemporary society and politics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

• to develop a nuanced understanding of the concepts ‘terrorism’ and ‘diaspora’ as academic fields of study, particularly as used in the fields of History and International Relations.

• to be able to identify and compare the different roles various diasporas play in the realm of politics, both on the national and international stages.

• to learn how to draw on historical methodology to inform our understanding of contemporary issues in international relations.

• to apply this knowledge to the development of academic research projects.
COURSE EVALUATION

Fifteen percent of your grade is based on class participation in class. For this reason, attendance is absolutely necessary: if you are not in class, you are not participating. If you are to miss a session, please contact me before class time. Of course, attendance is not the same as participation. Students are expected to contribute to class discussion in a constructive manner. Not only will this be beneficial to both your own and your colleagues’ understanding of the material, it will also allow me to gauge how well you are comprehending and synthesizing the course material. To do this, it is imperative that you complete the assigned readings for each week before we meet.

During the course of the semester, each student will be required to lead class discussion once. This assignment should be seen primarily as an exercise to help you organize your thoughts about the readings. These presentations are not meant to serve as a summary of material, but rather as a platform for exploring that given week’s material more deeply.

Additionally, students will be asked to submit two (2) 500 word critical response papers. The first will deal with the materials related to concepts and definitions examined in weeks 2 and 3. The second will contend with one of the case studies we explore in weeks 4 and 5. Please refer to the online resource for what is expected from the response papers.

The final assignment will consist of a project proposal and annotated bibliography, each consisting 1,000 words. The student will be expected to develop a project related to an historical case of diasporic political violence. The proposed research plan will include sections on the subject, aims, materials and methods of the project. In conjunction with the proposal, the student will submit an annotated bibliography supporting the research plan. The assignment should be seen as an exercise in strengthening the student’s understanding of how an academic project is undertaken. Students will be expected to present their research topics to the class during the final class session on December 10. Again, please refer to the online resource for what is expected from the project proposal and annotated bibliography.

Breakdown of assessment:

- Attendance and Participation 15%
- Presentation 15%
- ‘Concepts’ Response Paper (500 words, Due Sunday, November 22 @ 23.59) 20%
- ‘Case Study’ Response Paper (500 words, Due Sunday, December 6 @ 23.59) 20%
- Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (2x 1,000 words, Due Thursday, December 17 @ 23.59) 30%

CLASS POLICIES

- Plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty will result, at a minimum, in the student failing the class. The case will then be referred to the Committee on Academic Dishonesty. It is the responsibility of the student to understand what constitutes plagiarism and academic dishonesty. For reference, please consult the following university documents: Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism, the CEU Policy Document and the MA Handbook.
• All assignments must be submitted electronically using MS Word to my email address. The due date of all assignments is indicated in the syllabus, and can be submitted until 23.59. For each 24 hour period past the deadline, the assignment will be docked 1/3 of a letter grade. Papers will not be accepted more than seven days after the due date.

• If you have an issue with a grade you’ve received, I am more than willing to take your concerns into consideration. I will not, however, hear any verbal requests for a grade change. Instead, I ask that you write me a short (250 word) explanation as to why you feel the grade I gave you was unsatisfactory. I will then return to the work with fresh eyes. Please note: this means the possibility exists that the grade can go down as well as up.

• All content for the class will be made available on online. It goes without saying that you are responsible for all information contained in this syllabus, imparted in class and provided electronically.

• Finally, the classroom is an electronics free room. Use of mobile telephones, computers, tablets or other electronic instruments is prohibited. Please come to class with writing utensils to take notes: it has been demonstrated that one learns much more taking handwritten notes than by way of typing or recording!

**COURSE SCHEDULE:**

**WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS**

**Tuesday, November 3:** No Assigned Readings

**Thursday, November 5:** Diasporas, Terrorism, and International Relations


**WEEK 2: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS—TERRORISM AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

**Tuesday, November 10**


**Thursday, November 12**


**WEEK 3: CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS—DIASPORA(S)**

**Tuesday, November 17**


**Thursday, November 19**


**WEEK 4: HISTORICAL CASE STUDIES**

**Tuesday, November 24: Ireland**


**Thursday, November 26: Croatia**


WEEK 5: CONTEMPORARY CASE STUDIES

Tuesday, December 1: Tamil LTTE


Thursday, December 3: Political Islam


WEEK 6: CONCLUSIONS

Tuesday, December 8


Thursday, December 10: No Assigned Readings

- Presentation of Research Proposal Topics