POLS 5179
Terrorism: A Comparative Politics Perspective

Instructor
Prof. Dr. Matthijs Bogaards
Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science
Central European University

E-mail: Visbogaards@ceu.edu
Office: Political Science building, room 403b.

Classes
Fridays, 11.00-12.40.

Office hours
To be announced (TBA).

Credits
2 CEU credits, 4 ECTS credits.

Course description
Traditionally, terrorism studies has been part of Security Studies and International Relations, even though the majority of terrorist incidents is domestic, not transnational. The implication is that knowledge of political systems is highly relevant for those interested in terrorism. This course introduces students to the Comparative Politics of terrorism. It conceptualizes terrorists and terrorist groups as actors whose actions should be understood within the context of a country’s political system. The guiding question is: Can political institutions tame the threat of terrorism? To answer this question, each week will examine the relationship between terrorism and a selected political institution.
**Course requirements**
No prior knowledge is assumed. Students are expected to be present at all seminars and to come prepared. If you are unable to attend class, you should notify the instructor via e-mail prior to the session.

**Assessment**
- Five reflections (10% each)
- Active seminar participation (10%)
- Research paper (40%)

Each student writes five “reflections” of 500 words maximum, everything included. In this note, the student reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of one of the mandatory readings for that week. Each reflection should contain the following elements: 1) a summary of the argument and evidence in the publication; 2) a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the analysis (theory, methods, data, conclusions); 3) an outlook or agenda for future research on the topic. Reflections are due at midnight on Thursday and should be uploaded on the course E-learning website. Reflections can be submitted for all weeks except weeks 1 and 12.

The final paper is an individual, original, research paper on a particular aspect of terrorism. The word limit is 1,500, everything included. The due date will be determined in consultation with the class.

Active class participation is expected and graded. Some tips: participate regularly, make informed contributions, focus on the main points, formulate clearly, respond to others in the discussion, and demonstrate critical engagement.

Please note that for all assessments, late submission and violation of the word or time limit will result in a lower grade. All written work should be uploaded on Turnitin and will be checked for plagiarism.

**Reading material**
All the course material is available in electronic form. The syllabus contains the required reading. Additional reading is suggested on a week-by-week basis.

**Learning outcomes**
At the end of the course the student should be able to:
- Understand the specific challenges posed by terrorism to open societies and democratic states;
- Reflect critically on the concept of terrorism;
- Understand the causes, conditions, and consequences of terrorism;
- Make an informed choice of political institutions that help to prevent, mitigate, or end terrorism;
- Summarize arguments, assess evidence, and formulate an opinion;
- Communicate effectively their informed opinion on the topics covered in class.
Course schedule

**Week 1 (Friday 11 January 2019) Introduction: What is Terrorism?**

The introductory session aims to clarify the concept of terrorism.

Reading:


**Week 2 (Friday 18 January 2019) Research on Terrorism**

This session provides an up-to-date overview of research on terrorism.

Reading:


**Week 3 (Friday 25 January 2019) Data on Terrorism**

This week introduces students to the largest publicly available data set on terrorism, allowing us to get familiar with the main trends and patterns.

Reading:


Week 4 (Friday 1 February 2019) Terrorism and Democracy

Are (new) democracies more vulnerable to terrorism and if so, why?

Reading:


Week 5 (Friday 8 February 2019) Terrorism and Consensus Democracy

There is a lot of evidence that consensus democracies are “kinder and gentler”. Are they also less prone to terrorism? The evidence is contested.

Reading:


Week 6 (Friday 15 February 2019) Terrorism and the Electoral System

While there seems to be a relationship between the type of electoral system and the degree of domestic terrorism, recent studies suggest that this effect may be limited to only some types of terrorism.

Reading:


Chapter 7 (Friday 22 February 2019) Terrorism and Political Parties

Ballots and bullets may be more closely connected then previously thought. Political parties have turned violent, terrorist groups transformed into political parties and, most worryingly of all, there are many hybrid groups that exhibit elements of both.

Reading:


Chapter 8 (Friday 1 March 2019) Terrorism and Local Autonomy

The literature on post-conflict societies has identified territorial autonomy as an important form of power sharing in the process of peace building. However, even though a sizeable share of terrorism is local and ethnic, terrorism studies have tended to neglect the importance of the territorial organization of power in a state.

Reading:


Week 9 (Friday 8 March 2019) Terrorism and Power Sharing

How are grievances organized, represented, and accommodated in national political systems? Does inclusion help to prevent or terminate terrorism?

Reading:


Week 10 (TBA) Counterterrorism and Type of Democracy

Democracies differ in the way they deal with terrorists and terrorist threats. Can type of democracy explain these differences? My paper is a first attempt to answer this question. The paper will be presented in the context of a research seminar, therefore there will be no regular class this week.

Reading:

Week 11 (Friday 22 March 2019) Transnational Terrorism and Domestic Political Institutions

Do domestic and transnational terrorism have the same causes?

Reading:


Week 12 (Friday 29 March 2019) Wrap-up session

We use the final session to summarize the main lessons learned and discuss the final papers.