

San Francisco State University
IR 361/CJ 461: Terrorism and Covert Political Action
Fall 2008

Ambassador David Fischer
HSS 353
Email: examb@sfsu.edu
405-0325

Office Hours: Wednesday 4-6
and by appointment

Instructions

Please read this syllabus very carefully. It contains not only the course outline, but also important information you will need throughout the course. I will refer to it often and will assume you have kept a copy for easy reference.

Textbooks

The text used in the course will be

Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism by Brigitte Nacos and published by Longman. This is a new book and may be somewhat difficult to find. The University Book Store has ordered it as a text for the course. The ISBN number is 0-321-16414-8.

The Looming Tower: Al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11 (Vintage) (Paperback) by Lawrence Wright. This, too, is available at the bookstore. You are expected to have read the book before the midterm exam.

Web Pages and E-Mail

I rely on email to stay in touch with students, make appointments, and in general, provide students with up to date information. At least once a week (and usually more often) you may receive emails with current news pertinent to the subject of the course. **This is required reading and is subject to examination.**

My address is examb@sfsu.edu

I know that many of you use free email services, most of which are proof of the old adage that you get what you pay for. Hotmail and AOL, for example, are notoriously bad about accepting email with large attachments. One of the benefits of being a student at SF State is that you can get a free email account. Blackboard uses your sfsu.edu account. If you use it to forward your email to another account, please make sure you have the ability to receive attachments. Often, it is simply a question of clearing out your mailbox once a week.

You are responsible for being able to receive the attachments.

Much of what is being written today about terrorism post September 11 is available via the Internet. The following are excellent web sites that offer a wealth of current information, as well as research materials you may use for your research paper.

<http://www.terrorism.com/index.shtml> (The Terrorism Research Center)

<http://www.library.georgetown.edu/guides/terrorism/> (Georgetown University)

<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/> (US Department of State, Office of Counter-Terrorism)

<http://www.cfr.org> (Council on Foreign Relations)

<http://fas.org/terrorism/index.html> (Federation of American Scientists)

Purpose of the Course

Long before the events of September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington, terrorism has been used as an instrument of covert warfare in international relations. The primary purpose of the course is to examine political violence and terrorism, from both a comparative and international relations perspective. In addition, an important goal is to evaluate how policy makers and scholars approach the problem of terrorism. The course will cover

1. The problems of defining terrorism, as well as the theoretical underpinnings of political violence and terrorism;
2. The use of covert action as an instrument of statecraft
3. The linkages between Narco-terrorism, international crime and money laundering
4. Different forms of covert action ranging from propaganda to paramilitary action
5. The evolving nature of the threat (including the threat of weapons of mass destruction) posed by international violence and terrorism. This will include multilateral responses to the threat, and the implications of these developments for both vulnerabilities and responses to political violence and terrorism.
6. Ethical dilemmas in military, political, economic and covert responses to asymmetric covert warfare.
7. Legal responses, domestic and international, to the threat.

Since September 11th, America has focused on al-Qaeda and other Islamic terror organizations, but as you will learn through the semester political violence and terror are, indeed, world-wide phenomena, by no means limited to one ideology or belief. Nor is the United States the sole target of terrorism.

This course, therefore, is neither a study of radical Islam, nor of US policies in the Middle East. Rather, it focuses on the acts of terror and political violence and possible means to counter them.

A Note on the Instructor

I am a retired Foreign Service Officer who served in the Department of State for 30 years. As both an Ambassador overseas and a policy maker in Washington I was a consumer of intelligence on issues ranging from the Soviet Union's strategic nuclear arsenal to efforts to end apartheid in South Africa. As a senior officer I had oversight of many intelligence operations in the countries of my responsibility. Aside from a two-year assignment as an analyst on Polish and Czechoslovak affairs in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (1968-1969), I have never worked for any intelligence agency.

As an American diplomat living abroad my family and I were well aware of the dangers posed by terrorist activity. We lived our lives accordingly.

My experience working for the United State government has led me to reject conspiratorial views of history and foreign policy that are, in my view, far too prevalent (what I call the X-Files factor.) I am always bemused by the fact that the same people who believe in black helicopters or other nefarious plots are often the same people who believe that the US government cannot efficiently organize a two-car funeral.

I trust that all of you will read with open minds and draw your own conclusions based **on rigorous research and analysis. If there is one thing I hate worse than bad writing, it is sloppy analysis!**

If you wish to pursue the various conspiracy theories of history, I urge you to read Daniel Pipes' **Conspiracy, How the Paranoid Style Flourishes** (New York, The Free Press 1997.)

Examinations

I have the justly deserved reputation as a fairly lenient teacher. But this course will be different, not only because the subject is so important but also because there is a lot of ground to cover.

To cut to the chase, there will be a midterm exam and a final. Grades will be based on the following criteria:

| | |
|---------|-----|
| Midterm | 25% |
| Quizzes | 25% |
| Final | 50% |

The readings are tied --- albeit loosely --- to the lectures. But each week you will be assigned a series of readings, and I expect you will be prepared for discussion of that case. I will “cold call:” that’s a practice whereby I will call on you to answer questions on the case whether you volunteer or not.

Key DATES

September 23 - last day to add/drop classes

October 21 - last day to request CR/NC

November 21 - last day to withdraw

Course Outline (All reading refers to the text.)

| | |
|--|--|
| Week 1 Reading | Introduction and the Problem of Definition Chapter 1 and 2 (pp.1-36) |
| Week 2 Reading | Terror in an Historical Context: Murder as Radical Chic Chapter 3 and 4, (pp. 36-84) |
| Week 3 Reading | Ideology as Motive Chapter 5 (pp.85-106) |
| Week 4 Reading | al Qa’eda To be assigned |
| Week 5 Reading | Sponsors of Terror Chapter 6 (pp. 107-119) |
| Week 6 Reading | Logic of Terror, Politics as Usual? Chapter 7 (pp. 120-146) |
| Week 7 Reading | Logic of Terror , a Holy War? To be assigned |
| Week 8 Midterm Exam Reading | Methods and Means To be assigned |
| Week 9 Reading | Weapons of Mass Terror To be assigned |
| Week 10 | Follow the Money |

Reading Chapter 8 (pp. 147-162)

Week 11 Intelligence and Law Enforcement

Reading Chapter 9 (pp. 164-177)

Week 12 Law Enforcement

Reading Chapter 10 (pp. 178-190)

Week 13 Vulnerable America

Reading Chapter 11 (pp. 191-204)

Week 14 Legal, Ethical and Civil Liberties Considerations

Reading Chapter 12 (206-226)

Week 15 The Media and the Public

Chapter 14-16 (pp. 244-289)

Final Exam