

## IS 421-01: THE POLITICS OF TERRORISM

---

**Instructor:** COL Dennis Foster

**Office:** 434 SS Hall

**Meeting Times:** T H 0925-1040

**Telephone:** 464-7088

**Course Location:** 448 SS Hall

**Email:** [fosterdm@vmi.edu](mailto:fosterdm@vmi.edu)

**Office Hours:** M W 1000-1200 or by appointment

**Course Webpage (CANVAS):** <https://vmi.instructure.com/courses/2510>

---

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

The Politics of Terrorism is a three-credit course that focuses generally on the role of terrorist violence in the modern world. The two central goals of the course are to provide cadets with an opportunity to study the historical use of political terror and to encourage cadets to think of terrorist activity not as the work of the mad, but of self-interested and calculating political actors. After an introduction that includes a definition of terrorism and an exploration of its genesis, the course focuses on the rational and psychological aspects of the individual terrorist, terror types, strategies, and tactics, and the difficult task of counterterrorism. The final part of the course illustrates and highlights each of these aspects by examining cases culled from recent history, including the Zionist-British conflict over Palestine in the 1940s, the Algerian drive for independence in the 1950s, and the ongoing standoff between the USA and Islamic fundamentalist terrorists.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Hoffman, Bruce. 2006. *Inside Terrorism*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. New York: Columbia University Press.

Bowyer Bell, J. 1996. *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence*, Reprint Edition. New York: Transaction Publishers

Several additional readings will be posted on CANVAS (Denoted "C" in syllabus).

**CANVAS:** Important information for this course will be posted on VMI's new academic interface, CANVAS. This syllabus, lecture notes and readings will be posted on the course's CANVAS home page. Several assignments for this course will also be taken on or submitted to CANVAS. Feel free, also, to post questions about the material or other course-related matters in the "Discussions" section; I will answer them as time permits. We'll go over the operational details of CANVAS in class.

**IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH CADET TO OBTAIN (FROM CANVAS) AND COMPLETE EACH READING IN ADVANCE OF THE DATES WITH WHICH THEY ARE ASSOCIATED IN THE COURSE OUTLINE (pp3-4).**

## GRADING

1. **Quizzes (10%):** The Politics of Terrorism is an advanced course in political science. Thus, I have assigned relatively sizable amounts of reading and expect that each reading assignment be completed. To help ensure completion, **THREE quizzes** will be administered throughout the semester, dealing exclusively with concepts taken from the assigned readings. The dates of each quiz are noted in the course schedule. Each quiz will be worth EIGHT points.
2. **Exam 1 (15%):** This exam will cover material from Part 1 of the course, and will be administered on **24 September**. It will require cadets to answer **SIX** of the ten short questions asked. Each answer will be worth SIX points.
3. **Analytical Paper #1 (15%):** This paper, due **15 October**, will require cadets to systematically apply an analytical concept covered in Part 1 of the course to a recent article on terrorism or counterterrorism. Specific details of this assignment are given on **page 5** of this syllabus. The paper is worth THIRTY-SIX points.
4. **Exam 2 (15%):** This exam will cover material from Part 2 of the course, and will be administered on **5 November**. It will require cadets to answer **SIX** of the ten short questions asked. Each answer will be worth SIX points.
5. **Analytical Paper #2 (15%):** This paper, due **8 December**, will require cadets to systematically apply an analytical concept covered in Part 2 of the course to a recent article on terrorism or counterterrorism. Specific details of this assignment are given on **page 5** of this syllabus. The paper is worth THIRTY-SIX points.
6. **Final (30%):** The final exam will require cadets to integrate the concepts studied in the first two parts of the course with the cases examined in the final part of the course. In this sense, the final is cumulative. Cadets will be required to answer **THREE** of the six essay questions asked. Each answer will be worth TWENTY-FOUR points.
7. **Participation:** Class participation is not associated with a percentage grade. However, consistent and incisive participation – to include regular instances of meaningful contribution to class discussions – will be integral in any decision on the part of the instructor to “bump up” final semester grades.

The proportion of the **240** total available points that each cadet attains determines his or her final grade. The final grading scale is as follows:

<b>A:</b>	<b>216-240 points.</b>
<b>B:</b>	<b>192-215 points.</b>
<b>C:</b>	<b>168-191 points.</b>
<b>D:</b>	<b>144-167 points.</b>
<b>F:</b>	<b>0 - 143 points.</b>

## CLASSROOM POLICIES

- Work for Grade Policy regulations are fully applicable and will be enforced for each of the assignments and tests (see pages 7-10).
- Qualified cadets are permitted to take 3.0 cuts with the approval of the instructor.
- Exams, quizzes, and other assignments will not be postponed except as provided by Institute regulations. Exams, quizzes, and due dates for assignments will be rescheduled only at the discretion of the instructor, and on his terms.
- Late submission of any written work is graded down six grade points per day.
- Other than water in a closed container, no tobacco products, food, beverages, or gum are allowed in the classroom.
- Obscene language will not be permitted.
- The use of personal electronic devices for purposes not associated with classwork is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, (a) any form of communication (i.e., speaking and texting) with a cellular or “smart” phone; and (b) the use of a laptop or “pad” computer for tasks other than those pertaining to IS 421. The instructor reserves the right to confiscate devices used in contravention of these policies.

“VMI abides by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 which mandate reasonable accommodations are provided for all cadets with documented disabilities. If you have a registered disability and may require some type of instructional and/or examination accommodations, please contact me early in the semester so that I can provide or facilitate provision of accommodations you may need. If you have not already done so, you will need to register with the Office of Disabilities Services, the designated office on Post to provide services for cadets with disabilities. The office is located on the 2nd floor of the VMI Health Center. Please call or stop by the office of LTC Jones, Director of Disabilities Services, for more information, 464-7667 or [jonesl10@vmi.edu](mailto:jonesl10@vmi.edu).”

## COURSE OUTLINE

(Readings in CANVAS denoted “C”)

### Part 1: Terrorism – Theory, Definitions, and Individual Motivations

- 9/1: Introduction and Overview
- 9/3: Theory and Terrorism  
[C] Crenshaw, “Theories of Terrorism”
- 9/8: The Spectrum of Political Violence: Terrorism as “The Weapon of the Weak”  
[C] Merari, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency”
- 9/10: Terrorism Defined  
Hoffman Chapter 1; [C] Howard, “What’s in a Name?”
- 9/15: Terrorism Defined  
[C] Harmon, “Terrorism”; [C] Byford, “The Wrong War”  
**IN CLASS: Quiz #1**
- 9/17: Who Becomes a Terrorist? Instrumental Explanations  
[C] Crenshaw, “The Logic of Terrorism”; [C] Crenshaw, “Motivation for Terrorism”;  
[C] Ehrlich and Liu, “Some Roots of Terrorism”
- 9/22: Who Becomes a Terrorist? Psychological Explanations  
[C] Post, “Terrorist Psycho-logic”; [C] Victoroff, “The Mind of the Terrorist”
- 9/24: **Exam 1**
- ### Part 2: Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Types, Strategy, and Tactics
- 9/29: Terrorism: A Typology  
[C] Whittaker, “Terrorism’s Occurrence Worldwide”
- 10/1: Terrorist Groups, Strategy, and Tactics: Ethno-Nationalism and Separatism  
Hoffman Chapters 2 & 6
- 10/6: Terrorist Groups, Strategy, and Tactics: Ethno-Nationalism and Separatism  
[C] Wilkinson “The Emergence of Modern Terrorism”; [C] Byman, “The Logic of Ethnic Terrorism”
- 10/8: Terrorist Groups, Strategy, and Tactics: Religious Terrorism (Millenarianism)  
[C] Cameron, “Messianism and Millenarianism”
- 10/13: Terrorist Groups, Strategy, and Tactics: Religious Terrorism (Politico-Religious)  
Hoffman Chapter 4; [C] Ranstorp, “Terrorism in the Name of Religion”  
**IN CLASS: Quiz #2**
- 10/15: “Auto-Radicalization” and Politico-Religious Organizations  
[C] Pantucci, “A Typology of Lone Wolves”; [C] Phillips, “Deadlier in the US?...”  
**IN CLASS: Analytical Paper #1 Due**
- 10/20: The Tactic of Suicide Terrorism  
[C] Pape, “The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism”; [C] Israeli, “Islamikaze and Their Significance”

10/22: Terrorist Strategy, Tactics, and the Mass Media: Feeding on Freedom  
[C] Wilkinson, "The Media and Terrorism"; [C] Nacos, "Accomplice or Witness?";  
**skim** Hoffman Chapter 5

10/27: Counterterrorism: Introduction  
[C] Wardlaw, "Counter-Terrorist Policies: Fundamental Choices";  
[C] Sederberg, "Conciliation as a Counter-Terrorist Strategy"

10/29: Counterterrorism: Military and Intelligence  
[C]: Wardlaw, "Counter-Measures Against Terrorism: The Intelligence Function";  
[C] Wilkinson "The Role of the Military in Combating Terrorism"

11/3: Counterterrorism: Domestic Institutional Responses  
[C] Schmid, "Terrorism and Democracy"; [C] USA PATRIOT Act Summary

11/5: **Exam 2**

### **Part 3: Contemporary Cases of Domestic and International Terrorism**

11/10: **NO CLASS (Founders' Day)**

11/12: Case 1: The FLN and the French in Algeria, 1954-1962  
[C] O'Ballance, "The Algerian Insurrection"

11/17: Case 1: The FLN and the French in Algeria, 1954-1962  
[C] Heggoy, "Insurgency and Counterterrorism in Algeria"

11/19: Case 2: The Zionist Irgun and the British in Palestine, 1945-1948  
Bonyer Bell, Part 3, Chapters 1 & 2

11/24: **IN CLASS: Discussion of Second Analytical Paper Assignment**  
No Readings Assigned

11/26: **NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Furlough)**

12/1: Case 2: The Zionist Irgun and the British in Palestine, 1945-1948  
Bonyer Bell, Part 3, Chapters 3 & 4  
**IN-CLASS: Quiz #3**

12/3: Case 3: Fundamentalist Islamic Terrorists and the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
[C] Ryan, "The Historical Roots of Al-Qaeda's Ideology"

12/8: Case 3: Fundamentalist Islamic Terrorists and the United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century  
[C] 9/11 Commission Report Chapters 1-5  
**IN CLASS: Analytical Paper #2 Due**

12/10: Case 3 Wrap-up, Conclusions and Evaluations  
[C] 9/11 Commission Report Chapters 6-7 and 10-11

## Analytical Papers

The fundamental purpose of political science is to maximize our ability to simplify, explain, and predict phenomena in the political realm through the application of behavioral theories. Too frequently, this important lesson is lost upon consumers of the popular media, who may ultimately – and wrongly – come to believe that political terrorism is beyond the realm of reason, understanding, and analysis. Accordingly, the goal of these papers is gauge your capacity (and willingness) to employ theoretical concepts developed in the class to explain terrorist and/or counterterrorist actions.

1. For the first analytical paper (**due 15 October on CANVAS**), choose a recent article from a reputable news source that addresses a politically-oriented action taken by a terrorist or counterterrorist organization. (By “reputable,” I mean a respected news periodical whose primary motivation is the reporting of fact rather than the statement of opinion; this would include such outlets as *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, etc., but would exclude blogs and wikis. By “recent,” I mean articles published after 12/31/14). The action need not involve the actual use of violence, but must be directly relevant to a conflict involving terrorist violence.

Once you have chosen an article, your assignment is to write a 7 page paper – double-spaced, 12 point font, with page numbers, and properly cited – that (a) contextualizes the action (i.e., provides “background” about the conflict of which the action is a part), and (b) thoroughly explains the action by using one of the following concepts that we learned about in the first part of the course:

- The manipulation of terrorism’s definition for politically-motivated purposes;
- Psychological explanations of individual joining decisions or group cohesion; or
- Terrorists’ manipulation of the “apathetic subgroup majority”

Cadets should endeavor to “fit” the action into the ongoing conflict, and will clearly and systematically apply the concept as presented in class, citing course texts or outside materials where relevant. Cadets should actively avoid “stretching” concepts to fit events. **All told, any failure to explicitly lay out both the theory and the evidence, and to make a compelling and well-reasoned argument linking the theory to the evidence, will result in a subpar grade.**

2. The second analytical paper (**due 8 December on CANVAS**) should follow the same basic format as the first (regarding source choice, paper length, and goals, including contextualization), with the following change: cadets are required to explain a different action from a different terrorist conflict (in relation to their first paper) using one of the following concepts that we learned about in the second part of the course:

- The impact of the adoption of extreme counterterrorist stances;
- The individual and collective roots of rational suicide terrorism; or
- The impact of terrorists’ primary motivations (separatism, etc.) on the level of violence employed

**Both papers must be submitted with a link to or electronic file copy of the chosen article.**

Extensive assistance by the instructor in completing these assignments is available, but only upon the request of the cadet. General guidelines for academic integrity, research practices, citation, attribution are addressed in the “Work for Grade” policies attached to this syllabus, and will be discussed by the instructor in class.

## WORK FOR GRADE POLICY

Development of the spirit as well as the skills of academic inquiry is central to the mission of VMI's Academic Program. As a community of scholars, posing questions and seeking answers, we invariably consult and build upon the ideas, discoveries, and products of others who have wrestled with related issues and problems before us. We are obligated ethically and in many instances legally to acknowledge the sources of all borrowed material that we use in our own work. This is the case whether we find that material in conventional resources, such as the library or cyberspace, or discover it in other places like conversations with our peers.

Academic integrity requires the full and proper documentation of any material that is not original with us. It is therefore a matter of honor. To misrepresent someone else's words, ideas, images, data, or other intellectual property as one's own is stealing, lying, and cheating all at once.

Because the offense of improper or incomplete documentation is so serious, and the consequences so potentially grave, the following policies regarding work for grade have been adopted as a guide to cadets and faculty in upholding the Honor Code under which all VMI cadets live:

### 1) Cadets' responsibilities

"**Work for grade**" is defined as any work presented to an instructor for a formal grade or undertaken in satisfaction of a requirement for successful completion of a course or degree requirement. All work submitted for grade is considered the cadet's own work. "**Cadet's own work**" means that he or she has composed the work from his or her general accumulation of knowledge and skill except as clearly and fully documented and that it has been composed especially for the current assignment. No work previously submitted in any course at VMI or elsewhere will be resubmitted or reformatted for submission in a current course without the specific approval of the instructor.

In all work for grade, failure to distinguish between the cadet's own work and ideas and the work and ideas of others is known as **plagiarism**. Proper documentation clearly and fully identifies the sources of all borrowed ideas, quotations, or other assistance. The cadet is referred to the VMI-authorized handbook for rules concerning quotations, paraphrases, and documentation.

In all written work for grade, the cadet must include the words "**HELP RECEIVED**" conspicuously on the document, and he or she must then do one of two things: (1) state "none," meaning that no help was received except as documented in the work; or (2) explain in detail the nature of the help received. In oral work for grade, the cadet must make the same declaration before beginning the presentation. Admission of help received may result in a lower grade but will not result in prosecution for an honor violation.

Cadets are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted. This enjoinder does not imply that any inadvertent expression or behavior that might indicate one's feeling about the test should be considered a breach of honor. The real issue is whether cadets received information, not available to everyone else in the class, which would give them an unfair advantage. If a cadet inadvertently gives or receives information, the incident must be reported to the professor and the Honor Court.

Each cadet bears the responsibility for familiarizing himself or herself thoroughly with the policies stated in this section, with any supplementary statement regarding work for grade expressed by the academic department in which he or she is taking a course, and with any special conditions provided in writing by the professor for a given assignment. If there is any doubt or uncertainty about the correct interpretation of a policy, the cadet should consult the instructor of the course. There should be no confusion, however, on the

basic principle that it is never acceptable to submit someone else's work, written or otherwise, formally graded or not, as one's own.

The violation by a cadet of any of these policies will, if he or she is found guilty by the Honor Court, result in his or her being dismissed from VMI. Neither ignorance nor professed confusion about the correct interpretation of these policies is an excuse.

## **2) Faculty members' responsibilities**

Each academic department will publish an official statement of supplementary departmental policies regarding work for grade, titled "Departmental Statement Concerning VMI's Policies Regarding Work for Grade." Each departmental statement will include explicit policies on the following: (a) tutoring\* [e.g., Writing Center, Learning Center, athletic tutors, private tutors], (b) peer collaboration\*, and (c) computer aids, including calculators, translators, spelling, style, and grammar checkers. Individual course assignments that deviate from the departmental work for grade policies must be approved by the department head in advance and must be explained to cadets in writing.

No departmental or individual assignment policies may contradict or compromise the Institutional principles expressed in the Academic Regulations, particularly notions of academic integrity and the requirement to document borrowed material and help received. Each departmental statement must be approved by the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty following review by the Academic Policy Committee of the Academic Board. A copy of the document must be filed with the Superintendent, the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty, and the Superintendent's Representative to the Honor Court. Such a statement must be signed by the department head and must be posted in each classroom used by the department.

As an essential part of the duty of teaching and a matter of professional citizenship, faculty are expected to adhere to established work for grade policies and to communicate clearly and regularly with their cadets about the values and practices of academic honesty and integrity. Each faculty member must therefore include work for grade policies in a syllabus for every course he or she teaches. Each syllabus must include an exact transcription of the section titled "Cadets' Responsibilities" from "Work for Grade Policies" in the VMI Academic Regulations and a full statement of the established departmental policies regarding work for grade, plus any approved course-specific policies.

Furthermore, all faculty members are responsible for discussing with all of their cadets the details, definitions, and implications of (1) the entire section of the Academic Regulations entitled "Work for Grade Policies"; (2) the relevant sections on quotations, paraphrasing, and documentation in the current VMI-authorized handbook; and (3) the departmental and any approved course-specific policies regarding Work for Grade. This discussion must take place before any work is submitted for grade, and it should be treated with the gravity and level of detail that it merits.

Faculty must also review the Institute policy regarding the discussion of quizzes and exams with their classes. Specifically, faculty must remind cadets that they are prohibited from discussing the contents of a quiz/exam with anyone except the professor until it is returned to them or final course grades are posted.

If a member of the faculty believes that a cadet has violated one or more of VMI's, the department's, or the instructor's work for grade policies, he or she should report the evidence to the head of the department. The department head will decide whether the collected evidence justifies referral to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. If the department head decides that the evidence does not justify referral, then he or she will conclude the investigation. Otherwise, the department head will submit a written report to the Deputy Superintendent for Academics and Dean of the Faculty. The report must contain both



a recommendation for action and all relevant documents, including a statement signed by the faculty member who reported the violation.

The instructor will assign a grade of “F” following a formal charge of an Honor Court academic violation in his or her course until the issue is resolved.

\* Departmental policies must include a statement on whether tutors and peers may offer cadets **critical comments** on their papers. Offering **critical comments** means giving general advice on such matters as organization, thesis development, support for assertions, and patterns of errors. It does not include proofreading or editing.

**Proofreading** means correcting errors (e.g., in spelling, grammar, punctuation). It is the last step taken by the writer in the **editing** process. In addition to the corrections made in proofreading, **editing** includes making such changes as the addition, deletion, or reordering of paragraphs, sentences, phrases, or words. **A cadet may not have his or her work proofread or edited by someone other than the instructor.** [Instructors may grant exceptions to this rule only if they have received written permission from the department head for a particular assignment.]

**Department of International Studies & Political Science**  
**Work for Grade Policy**

Work for Grade in this department is generally of the following types.

1. Written quizzes, tests, or examinations
2. Book reviews
3. Research Papers, policy memoranda, briefing papers, and discourse analysis-- identification and analysis of the critical differences in the findings and opinions of scholars on issues of interest to the discipline.
  1. Cadets are permitted and encouraged to study with their peers to prepare for quizzes, tests and exams. However, when a cadet takes either written or oral quizzes, tests, and examinations, answers must be his/her own work without help from any other source, including notes or consultation with others.
  2. In the case of book reviews, research and other papers, as described in "2" and "3" above, research and composing of such works must be done by the cadet alone. Cadets are permitted to use spell and grammar-checking facilities.

IS cadets are encouraged to make use of all VMI tutoring services to receive critical comments (defined above). Cadets who do so and mark "Help Received" will not receive a lower grade on an assignment. Cadets are also permitted to seek critical comments on their written work from their peers. However, proof-reading and editing (**defined above**) of a cadet's written work is not permitted.

Any exceptions to these rules, including the use of tutors, collaboration among cadets, and the use of computer style, spell and grammar checkers must be explained in writing by the course instructor. Instructors are at liberty to stipulate exceptions only with the written approval of their department head.

**If you have any questions about the application of these rules, consult your instructor. Do not leave anything to chance.**

Colonel James J. Hentz  
Professor and Head