

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2014**

Philosophy 2083F: Terrorism

Fall Semester 2015
Monday 1:30-2:30; Wednesday, 1:30-3:30
Physics and Astronomy Building, Rm. 117

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DESCRIPTION

The modern origins of our concept of 'terrorism' find root in the French Revolution and the 'Reign of Terror' (1793-94). Robespierre wrote that

If the basis of a popular government in peacetime is virtue, its basis in a time of revolution is virtue and terror: virtue, without which terror would be barbaric; and terror, without which virtue would be impotent.

Those charged with liquidating 'enemies of the revolution' in revolutionary France were the first to be dubbed with the name 'terrorists,' an etymological origin that is thus grounded in the notion of state-sponsored violence. This is at odds with our contemporary usage, which focuses on subnational entities, a shift in usage that can be traced to anarchist political violence around the turn of the 20th century. But 'state-sponsored' terror has never quite left our discourse, either.

Definitions matter. Implicit in a definition of 'terrorism' are our moral commitments, our ideologies, our practices. It de-legitimizes some forms of violence while legitimizing others. The designation of 'terrorist' allows the use of extraordinary forms of surveillance, coercion, detention, control, and war. Definitions are thus inherently philosophical: they provide the communal framework with which we discuss reality. This course will therefore address the moral and philosophical issues of 'terror' in part via the seemingly dry path of 'definition.' (Yet Diderot's *Encyclopédie*, too, was once described as an "instrument of war"!) But by attempting to answer the question 'what is terrorism?' we are led to consider the use, justification, context, morality, and our responses to the political uses of violence.

TEXTS

Required: Igor Primoratz, *Terrorism: The Philosophical Issues* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

A further selection of readings will be made available via WebCT.

OBJECTIVES

This course has two objectives. First, as an essay course in philosophy, it serves as a means of exercising high-level skills in reading, analysis, reflection, and (argumentative) writing. The course requirements reflect this underlying motivation.

Second, however, the topic is of intrinsic interest: we are all citizens of a democracy and part of a decision-making process that (however alienating!) ultimately derives its legitimacy from the consent of the governed. How we address political violence strikes at the very heart of politics: a government, as Max Weber noted, can be defined as “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force.” Thinking about terrorism---that is, about the limits of political violence---is thinking about what it means to be governed.

REQUIREMENTS

20% - Four reading responses (in-class; choice of readings)
15% - Term Paper Outline
30% - Final Paper
35% - Final Exam

With the exception of the final exam, *all* assignments must be submitted via WebCT. Late assignments will be penalized.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Content Warning: Many of these readings deal directly with political violence, often related to race or religion. Sensitive and difficult historical and social issues will be candidly discussed.

Part 1: Historical and Conceptual Issues

Week 1: (Introductory lecture; please read Terrorism, SEP:
<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/terrorism/>)

Week 2: Defining Terrorism (Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* chapter 1 - WebCT).

Week 3: Defining Terrorism (Coady, textbook); What is terrorism? (Primoratz, textbook)

Week 4: Introduction (Robin, *Fear: The History of a Political Idea* – WebCT); Suggested reading: The Foundation of the New Terrorism (*9/11 Commission Report*, 47-70 – WebCT); Crimes of State / Choice of Action (Chomsky, *9-11* – WebCT).

Part 2: Morality, if any

Week 5: The Morality of Terrorism (Primoratz - WebCT); How Could They: People do Violence Because Their Moral Codes Demand it (Tage Rai, *Aeon Magazine* – WebCT)

Week 6: The Burdens of Terrorism, (Fotion, textbook); The Solo Crusader: Theodore Kaczynski and Timothy McVeigh (Desa / McCarthy, *A New Understanding of Terrorism* – WebCT).

Week 7: Terrorism, Rights, and Political Goals (Held, textbook); Terrorism, Morality and Supreme Emergency (Coady, textbook)

Week 8: How Can Terrorism be Justified? (Steinhoff, textbook); When Radical Becomes Terrorist: Law Enforcement and Eco-Sabotage (Christiansen, *A New Understanding of Terrorism*); Deep Ecology (Wikipedia article; no, really).

Part 3: Politics, Terror, and the Media

Week 9: The New Media, Terrorism, and the Shaping of Global Opinion (Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* – WebCT); The Media in Evil Circumstances (Fortner, *Handbook of Mass Media Ethics*, WebCT).

Week 10: What ISIS really wants (The Atlantic); Lynching in America (Equal Justice Initiative).

Week 11: State Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism (Primoratz, textbook); The Propaganda Project and the Iraq War (Altheides, WebCT).

Week 12: Violence and Terrorism in Northern Ireland (Simpson, textbook); Why Ireland Split (Video – WebCT); The Internal Dynamics of the FLQ During the October Crisis of 1970 (Crelinsten, *Journal of Strategic Studies* - WebCT). Suggested: FLQ Manifesto (WebCT).

Week 13: REVIEW / CATCH-UP