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Political Science 399H: Honors Seminar on Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and the Media Course Description and Syllabus

This syllabus describes the content, schedule, and expectations for Political Science 399, a seminar focusing on terrorism and counterterrorism coverage in the mass media. The course is intended for students at Purdue University enrolled in the University's Honor's College.

The goal of this course is to provide students a hands-on research experience on the effects of counterterrorism coverage on people's level of anxiety about terrorism. Students will be guided through each aspect of the research process, from question development to literature review to research design to study execution to data analysis. Training in how to write about the elements of a research project will also be provided through a series of focused exercises.

There is one required book for this class. It is:

Townshend, Charles. 2011. Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Additional required readings for this class will be provided through Blackboard. Students are expected to read the material in advance and to attend class prepared to discuss it. Student input is critical to the success of this seminar. Please take this responsibility seriously.

Course Requirements and Grading

Student performance will be evaluated based on the quality of their in-class contributions, written work, and exam performance. In-class evaluations will focus on the contributions students make to class discussions and activities (20%) and their record of attendance (15%). Evaluations of written work will focus on the quality of twelve (12) assignments comprising 65% of the final grade (9 assignments 5% each; 2 assignments 10% each). I use a plus/minus grading scale for the course. Details of the scale appear on Blackboard.

Note that in the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by either a revised semester calendar or other unforeseen circumstances. Changes to the course caused by such events will be described on the Blackboard web page for this class. I can also be contacted directly at the e-mail address and telephone number listed on the first page of this syllabus.

Policy on Issues of Academic Integrity

You are expected to adhere to University standards concerning academic integrity.

Students caught cheating may receive an F for the course. If the matter is in dispute, it will be brought to the department Chair and, if necessary, to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Course schedule

Week one (August 19-23): Introduction

- Townshend, Terrorism chapters 1-4
- **Assignment** (due August 25): Complete CITI human subjects training.

Week Two (August 26-28): Problem definition

- Townshend, Terrorism chapters 5-7
- Mueller, “Six rather unusual propositions about terrorism.”
- Nacos, “Mass Mediated Terrorism in the New World (Dis)Order,” chapter 1 of *Mass-mediated Terrorism*

Week Three (September 4): Influential literature I

- Sunstein, “Terrorism and probability neglect.”
- **Assignment** (September 9): Mueller, Sunstein, Nacos: what’s their perspective on the effects of terrorism on fear?

Week Four (September 9-13): Influential literature II

- Shanker and Schmitt, “How resilient is post-9/11 America?” (Blackboard).
- Nacos et al, “Prevention of Terrorism in Post-9/11 America: News Coverage, Public Perceptions, and the Politics of Homeland Security.”
- Bonanno et al, “What Predicts Psychological Resilience after Disaster?”
- **Assignment** (due September 16): Shanker and Schmitt, Nacos et al, and Bonanno: what’s their perspective on the effects of terrorism on fear?

Week Five (September 16-20): Project description.

- Farrugia et al, “Research questions, hypotheses, and objectives.”
- Hoffman, Aaron M. and William Shelby. “Mass-Mediated Counterterrorism.”

Week Six (September 23-27): Introduction to experimental design.

- Breckenridge et al, “After years of media coverage, can one more video report trigger heuristic judgments?”
- Croson, “Why and how to experiment.”

Week seven (September 30-October 2): Ethical issues in experimentation.

- Hertmann and Ortwig, “Deception in research” (Blackboard).
- **Assignment** (due October 2): Is this experiment ethical?

Week eight (October 9-11): Choosing and developing measures for experimentation.

- Review Bonanno.
- **Assignment** (due October 13): Develop measures of gender, trust in the media, political knowledge, fear of terrorism, and authoritarian attitudes.

Week nine (October 14-18): Selecting subjects: considerations

- Sears, “College sophomores in the laboratory.”
- Mook, “In defense of external invalidity.”
- Kam et al, “Beyond the narrow database.”
- **Assignment** (due October 20): What are the costs and benefits of different subject populations in research?

Week ten (October 21-25): Data analysis I: Introduction to R

- Quick R tutorial <http://youtu.be/LjuXiBjxryQ>
- Basic commands in R <http://youtu.be/9IdpIUEUo0k>
- **Assignment** (due October 27): Load data set and generate descriptive statistics for 3 variables.

Week eleven (October 28-November 1): Data analysis II: Examining the results using R

- Running a regression analysis with R <http://youtu.be/Ktks5K95uQM>
- **Assignment** (due November 1): Analyze relationship between 3 variables.

Week twelve (November 4-8): Data analysis III: Interpreting the results

- TBA
- **Assignment** (due November 10): Interpret the results of a regression analysis.

Week thirteen (November 11-15): The literature review.

- Knopf, “Doing literature reviews”
- **Assignment** (due November 17): Literature review (long assignment).

Week fourteen (November 18-20): Writing about the results I

- Agnew et al, “From the interpersonal to the international”
- **Assignment** (November 24): Write up research design (long assignment).

Week fifteen (November 22-25): Writing up results II

- Pape, “The strategic logic of suicide terrorism.”
- **Assignment** (due December 1): Write-up introduction to research.

Week sixteen (December 2-5): Conclusions.