Terrorism, Violence, & Aggression Syllabus

Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn—Benjamin Franklin

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SOCIOLOGY 3965
Spring 2009 (Sec 1)
Tu & Th (BehS 102)

COURSE CONTENT
As citizens of an increasingly complex and often terrifying world, we live with daily threats of terrorism, violence, and aggression to greater or lesser degrees. Students of sociology and criminology have long been concerned with these uneasy topics, and continue to pursue some understanding of perpetrators, conditions, societal structures, and political regimes that may encourage such hostility toward one's fellowman. SOC 3965 will explore various aspects of these subjects as they relate primarily to contemporary life and society.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Each student, upon completion of this course, should be able to recognize, define, and understand core issues of Terrorism, Violence, & Aggression. Students will gain a working knowledge of the key elements of the content identified as critical to this field of learning. Students will be able to describe and discuss the various forms of terrorism as well as basic history and theories pertaining to terroristic threats. Students will also be capable of a microanalysis of violence, including the ability to deconstruct the motivations and actions of serial killers, school shooters, domestic terrorists, and other radical offenders. Lastly, students will appreciate the cultural and structural aspects of violence and aggression within a societal setting.

TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS
The format of the course will include lecture, student participation and class discussions concerning the core texts, along with student book reports on related topics.

EVALUATION METHODS AND GRADING CRITERIA
Most upper-level, undergraduate courses in the social sciences require students to demonstrate mastery of material through successful completion of reading, assignments, AND participation. For SOC 3965, three book reports will contribute 30% each to the course grade. The remaining 10% of the course grade will reflect class participation (notations are made of level of responses during discussions). The purpose of this type of system is to assure maximum results through an ongoing effort by students to stay abreast of course materials, particularly the assigned readings. Success will be greatly impacted by familiarity with information before each class period, with students coming prepared to participate in class discussions (more about all of the assignments in the syllabus).

A An excellent work in all or nearly all aspects of the assignment. The student exemplifies originality of ideas, superior depth of thought, and extensive grasp of topics as well as technical superiority.
B A competent work with a lapse here or there. Ideas are clear and properly expressed; the writing is technically solid. The assignment is effective in meeting all criteria but does not rise to sustained distinction.
C An adequate work, but not good. Student ideas tend to be oversimplified, reductionistic, and lack sufficient explanation or exploration. Problems may also exist with grammar, logic, or ability to express thoughts in a manner reflective of a junior level class.
D A minimal effort by the student—the work is marred by problems with almost all aspects of the assignment. This is not considered a competent performance.
E A failing mark, generally reserved for assignments which are not submitted or miss the target on virtually every criteria of the project.
± Plus or minus may be given in addition to each of the grade levels when deemed appropriate by the professor.

REQUIRED TEXTS
**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)**

The University of Utah seeks to provide equal access to its programs, services and activities for people with disabilities. If you need accommodations in the class, reasonable prior notice needs to be given to the Center for Disability Services (CDS), 162 Olpin Union Building, 581-5020 (V/TDD). CDS will work with you and the instructor to make arrangements for accommodations. All written information in this course can be made available in alternative format with prior notification to the Center for Disability Services. Please discuss any concerns with the professor as soon as possible. (www.hr.utah.edu/oeo/aca/guide/faculty/).

**PARTICIPATION**

Research indicates that students who attend class on a regular basis earn higher marks than those who do not. SOC 3965 has been purposely designed to reward those who attend, having read the assigned chapters in advance, prepared to discuss the material. Class size notwithstanding, each student will be able to discuss important aspects of the texts under consideration on a regular basis. One of five marks (+, √, √-, -, or 0/N) will be noted on the student’s card for each time they are called to comment in class. Additionally, a daily roll will be maintained for attendance. Participation contributes 10% to the overall course grade, and represents a very critical part of the student’s effort. Participation marks will be available for student’s perusal upon request before or after class, or by appointment.

**BOOK REPORTS**

For SOC 3965, three book reports (one on each of the core texts) contribute 30% each of the course grade. The book report is a serious and important part of the overall class effort, meant to evidence to the instructor the student’s working knowledge of topics presented, and will be discussed in depth as the term progresses.

**Content**

1. 250 word abstract (single space—right and left justified margins);
2. introductory paragraph with overview of entire paper;
3. an analysis of the volume (may be written in first-person and should include student opinions);
4. conclusion.

**Technical**

1. 2500 words minimum (double spaced);
2. 10 point academic font.

**CLASS CALENDAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Jan</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Course introduction: presentation of syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 Jan</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Defining terrorism</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 1</td>
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<td>20 Jan</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>The end of empire and the origins of contemporary terrorism</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 2</td>
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<td>22 Jan</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>The internationalization of terrorism</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 Jan</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>Religion and terrorism</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 4</td>
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<td>29 Jan</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Suicide terrorism</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 5</td>
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<td>3 Feb</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>The old media, terrorism, and public opinion</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 6</td>
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<td>5 Feb</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>The new media, terrorism, and the shaping of global opinion</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 7</td>
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<td>10 Feb</td>
<td>Tu</td>
<td>The modern terrorist mindset: tactics, targets, tradecraft, and technologies</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 8</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Feb</td>
<td>Th</td>
<td>Terrorism—today and tomorrow</td>
<td>Hoffman—Chpt 9</td>
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17 Feb (Tu)  Introduction
Schechter—Intro

19 Feb (Th)  What it means
Schechter—Chpt 1

24 Feb (Tu)  Who they are
Schechter—Chpt 2

26 Feb (Th)  A history of serial murder
Schechter—Chpt 3

3 Mar (Tu)  Gallery of evil: ten American monsters
Schechter—Chpt 4

5 Mar (Th)  Sex and the serial killer
Schechter—Chpts 5

10 Mar (Tu)  Why they kill
Schechter—Chpts 6

12 Mar (Th)  Why they kill (continued)
Schechter—Chpts 6

16 Mar—21 Mar  SPRING BREAK—HOLIDAY—NO CLASSES!

24 Mar (Tu)  Evil in action
Schechter—Chpt 7

26 Mar (Th)  How it ends
Schechter—Chpt 8

31 Mar (Tu)  Serial killer culture
Schechter—Chpt 9

2 Apr (Th)  Serial killer culture (continued)
Schechter—Chpt 9

7 Apr (Tu)  Introduction: Media spectacle and the “Virginia Tech Massacre”;----------BOOK REPORT 2 DUE!
The time of spectacle;  
Guy Debord’s “Society of the Spectacle” and its limitations;  
Reading the Spectacle with critical social theory and cultural studies.
Kellnor—pp 1—13

9 Apr (Th)  Societal violence and guys and guns amok;  
The epidemic of school shootings;  
Media culture, militarism, and violent masculinity.
In this book.
Kellnor—pp 14—27
14 Apr (Tu)  Deconstructing the spectacle: race, guns, & the culture war;
The shootings & the politics of race;
A convocation and Cho’s multimedia dossier;
Guns and political scapegoating.
Kellnor—pp 28—49

16 Apr (Th)  School and workplace security; the debate begins;
Mourning, copycats, & ideological manipulation;
The situation of contemporary youth;
From boomers to busters;
Post-boomers and contemporary youth;
Youth alienation, violence, & the war against youth;
Perils of youth.
Kellnor—pp 50—88

21 Apr (Tu)  Constructing male identities and the spectacle of terror;
White male identity politics;
Militia, right-wing extremism, & terrorist bombings
Home-grown terrorism: Timothy McVeigh and Oklahoma City bombing;
Harvest of rage.
Kellnor—pp 89—112

23 Apr (Th)  The Unabomber and the politics of terror;
Middle-class white male Columbine High School shootings
The Columbine media spectacle and its exploitation;
Shooting at Columbine with Michael Moore: Guns, U.S. history, & violence in America;
Seung-Hui Cho in the borderlands between Korea & America.
Kellnor—pp 113—138

27 Apr (Tu)  What is to be done?
Aftermath;
Gun laws, school and workplace safety, & mental health care: the delicate balance;
Beyond the culture of male violence & rage;
New literacies, democratization, & the reconstruction of education;
Politics, prisons, & the abolition of The Democracy Project;
Horrors of the Prison-Industrial-Military Complex;
The time of abolitions.
Kellnor—pp 139—171

29 Apr (Th)  BOOK REPORT 3 DUE!
NOTE: Those who wish their grade for the final paper and course mailed to them should attach a
self-adhesive, legal size, self-addressed, stamped envelope with their final paper

THAT’S ALL FOLKS!!