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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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 3569, 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
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 3569 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 several marks (+, -, 0/N) will be noted on the student’s card for each time they are called to comment in class. 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.

1. 2500 words minimum (double spaced);
2. 250 word abstract (single space—right and left justified margins);
3. introductory paragraph with overview of entire paper, body, conclusion;
4. an analysis/evaluation of the volume (may be written in first-person and should include student opinions);
5. 10 point academic font, double-spaced, one-inch margins;
6. Please note number of total words at end of paper.

CLASS CALENDAR

13 Jan Introduction to course material; presentation of syllabus
20 Jan An idea whose time has come?
Not a modern phenomenon;
Ideology & terrorism: rights from wrongs
Combs—Part 1
27 Jan Criminals or crusaders?
Terrorism by the state;
Terrorism, Inc.
Combs—Part 2
3 Feb Terrorist training;
The media—a weapon for both sides?
Domestic terrorism in the United States
Combs—Part 3
10 Feb Legal perspectives on terrorism
The use of force to combat terrorism;
The use of legislation & intelligence to/Resources to combat terrorism;
Security measures: a frail defense
Combs—Part 4
17 Feb New terrorist threat—weapons of mass destruction;
Future trends
Combs—Part 5
24 Feb  
Introduction;-------------------------------------------BOOK REPORT 1 DUE!
School shooters: beyond the sound bite
Langman—Introduction & Chpt 1

3 Mar  
“I am the law”: two psychopathic shooters;
A God of sadness”: a schizotypal youth
Langman—Chpts 2 & 3

10 Mar  
“None of this is real”: four schizophrenics;
“Every man is a nightmare”: three traumatized children
Langman—Chpts 4 & 5

17 Mar  
Beyond the typology;
Kids caught in the nick of time;
What can be done: preventing school shootings
Langman—Chpts 6, 7, & 8

21—26 March  SPRING BREAK—NO CLASSES!

31 Mar  
Perspectives on hate & violence;----------BOOK REPORT 2 DUE!
Hate crimes
Levin—Chpts 1 & 2

7 Apr  
A typology of hate;
The benefits of bigotry
Levin—Chpts 3 & 4

14 Apr  
The production of rebels, deviants, and other decent people
Levin—Chpt 5

21 Apr  
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.