

# Media and Terrorism

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Office Hours: *Wednesday and Friday, 10:30am–12:30am.*

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Wednesday and Friday, 9:10am–10:05am.

“The success of a terrorist operation depends almost entirely on the amount of publicity it receives.”

— Walter Laquer, *Terrorism* (1977)

## Course Description

This course helps you understand the problem of political violence known as terrorism in our contemporary, increasingly global, world. Our approach is communication-based but draws upon literature from many disciplines to help explain the key issues related to international and domestic terrorism, counter-terrorism, and communication. We will use a case study format to examine the relationship between terrorism and the mass-mediated messages that depict it. You will be introduced to communication theories to explore and explain how media depictions, in both the news and fictional material, affect public opinion and social/political reactions to terrorism. Additionally, we will examine how terrorist groups use media to disseminate their messages.

## Course Objectives

Students who complete this course will be able to:

- Define terrorism and differentiate it from related concepts.
- Understand who terrorists are, what goals they have, and how societies have reacted to them.
- Recognize the extent to which terrorists rely on new and old media to achieve their goals.
- Consider the tension between the values of free societies and freedom-limiting measures sometimes used to fight terrorism.

## GE Requirements

This course fulfills the General Education requirements for Cross-Disciplinary Seminar and GE Diversity: Global Studies. The Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committees have specified certain learning outcomes for the course. These are as follows:

### Diversity

Goals: Students understand the pluralistic nature of institutions, society, and culture in the United States and across the world in order to become educated, productive, and principled citizens.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

### *Social Diversity in the United States*

- Students describe and evaluate the roles of such categories as race, gender and sexuality, disability, class, ethnicity, and religion in the pluralistic institutions and cultures of the United States.

- Students recognize the role of social diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values regarding appreciation, tolerance, and equality of others.

#### *Global Studies*

- Students understand some of the political, economic, cultural, physical, social, and philosophical aspects of one or more of the world's nations, peoples, and cultures outside the U.S.
- Students recognize the role of national and international diversity in shaping their own attitudes and values as global citizens.

#### **Cross-Disciplinary Seminar**

Goals: Students demonstrate an understanding of a topic of interest through scholarly activities that draw upon multiple disciplines and through their interactions with students from different majors.

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Understand benefits and limitations of different disciplinary perspectives.
- Understand benefits of synthesizing multiple disciplinary perspectives.
- Synthesize and apply knowledge from diverse disciplines to topic of interest.

## Required Materials

#### *Textbooks and readings*

There is no required text for this course. All readings will be made available on Carmen.

## Course technology

For help with your password, university e-mail, Carmen, or any other technology issues, questions, or requests, contact the OSU IT Service Desk. Standard support hours are available at <https://ocio.osu.edu/help/hours>, and support for urgent issues is available 24x7.

#### *Carmen*

Carmen, Ohio State's learning management system, will be used to host materials and activities throughout this course. To access Carmen, visit [carmen.osu.edu](https://carmen.osu.edu). Log in to Carmen using your name.# and password. If you have not setup a name.# and password, visit [my.osu.edu](https://my.osu.edu).

Help guides on the use of Carmen can be found at <https://resourcecenter.odee.osu.edu/carmen>

If you need additional services to use these technologies, please request accommodations with the instructor. More information on accessibility with Canvas LMS can be found at <https://community.canvaslms.com/docs/DOC-2061>

#### *Necessary software*

A word processor with the ability to save files to PDF format. Note that all Ohio State students have access to free copies of Microsoft's Office suite, which includes Word, for Windows, macOS, Android, iOS, and the web.

## Evaluation

This class will use the standard OSU grading scheme:

<b>A</b>	93-100%	<b>A-</b>	90-92.99%	<b>B+</b>	87-89.99%
<b>B</b>	83-86.99%	<b>B-</b>	80-82.99%	<b>C+</b>	77-79.99%
<b>C</b>	73-76.99%	<b>C-</b>	70-72.99%	<b>D+</b>	67-69.99%
<b>D</b>	60-66.99%	<b>E</b>	0-59.99%		

## Assignments

The final grade in the class will consist of the following:

Exams (x2)	150 / 30%
Response Papers (x3)	75 / 15%
Case Study Paper	125 / 25%
Participation	150 / 30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>500 / 100%</b>

**Exams:** There will be two exams, roughly corresponding with the midterm and final exam times. These will be administered outside of class time and include a mixture of multiple choice and short answer question formats.

**Response Papers:** Each of you will pick three week's readings and prepare essays dealing with the themes contained in those readings or other materials, e.g. videos. Each paper should be around 500 words (about one page, single-spaced). You will sign up for due dates for the essays, and they should be uploaded to Canvas before the start of class for the week you are writing about. I want your reactions to the course materials – not the lectures or class discussions – so the idea is that you write these before hearing the lectures or classroom discussion.

In preparing the essay, first consider ALL the material that is assigned for the given week; that is, read any articles or chapters assigned, watch any films, etc., and think about a theme that runs through these materials. In your essay, provide a concise description of the theme, and explain it. Offer your reaction to the theme.

The best essays will articulate a point of view with respect to the materials and then use facts from the materials to support this argument. These papers should not be a summary of the main points. I am more interested in your reaction to the information. This might involve the usefulness of the information, the level of interest you have in it, anything that you found particularly surprising or disappointing, etc. With that being said, your statements should have a *factual basis*. This is not a space for rants or speculation.

Note that although these essays are short, they should contain the elements of any well-written essay: A good, creative title, strong lead, and good introduction, transitions and conclusion. While you will not be graded for adherence to APA format, any external sources (other than assigned class materials) should be cited in a discernible way.

**Case Study Paper:** In this paper, which will be around 1000-1500 words in length, you will select a terrorist attack or set of attacks for closer analysis. You will describe the event, its background, its perpetrators and victims, and the media depictions thereof. You will use theories and (counter)examples from class to analyze this particular case. A list of potential events will be provided and any others you may want to analyze must be cleared with the instructor.

**Participation:** This course involves subject matter that is sometimes deeply multifaceted, controversial, and without simple truths. These sorts of issues can only be understood through careful conversation and exposure to varying points of view. A purely lecture- and reading-based format cannot provide this type of learning experience, so a significant component of the class involves participation in classroom discussions and other activities. In recognition of the fact that not everyone is as comfortable and skilled at jumping into an open discussion, the participation grade

will also be partly comprised of brief written assignments before and during class.

Detailed explanations of the requirements for assignments will be provided as they come due.

### *Grade Disputes*

Any dispute about a grade must be done within one week of the grade posting. You should compose an email, making clear that you are challenging the grade, with information about the assignment and details (using the rubric and guidelines) of why you feel you should receive a different score. Note that decreased scores, in addition to increased scores, are possible following a grade challenge.

## Course Policies

### *Reasonable Accommodation Policy*

The University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on your disability (including mental health, chronic or temporary medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, I may request that you register with Student Life Disability Services. After registration, make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations so that they may be implemented in a timely fashion. SLDS contact information: [slds@osu.edu](mailto:slds@osu.edu); 614-292-3307; [slds.osu.edu](http://slds.osu.edu); 098 Baker Hall, 113 W. 12th Avenue.

### *Late Policy*

Penalties on late work are as follows:

Time past deadline	Maximum grade
0-1 hour	95%
1-24 hours	90%
24-48 hours	80%
48-72 hours	70%
> 72 hours	0% (no credit)

In other words, a paper that is just under 24 hours late will first be assessed as if it is not late, then that grade will be multiplied by 90%. A 90% paper would then be entered as a 81% in the gradebook ( $.9 \times .9 = .81$ ). If there are special circumstances that cause you to be unable to complete assigned work, you may contact me to make arrangements. In all cases, I have discretion over whether the situation justifies excusing late work; furthermore, I may ask you to provide documentation of the issue (e.g., signed doctor's note). Generally speaking, I will be more accommodating if approached well ahead of the assignment due date.

### *Discussion and Communication*

The following are my expectations for how we should communicate as a class.

**Tone and civility:** Statements that generalize about religions, nationalities, ethnicities, races, sexual orientations, gender identities, and physical, mental, or intellectual abilities will not be tolerated. This is not an exhaustive list. Furthermore, the course is not designed to be a platform for political or religious debates. On some occasions, we will deliberately discuss questions of policy and morality at which times you should feel empowered to state your feelings. At other times, we will discuss sensitive topics with the goal of factual and/or scientific understanding rather than moral evaluation.

During course discussions, do not assume that I agree or disagree with you or someone else just because I do not say so. Likewise, do not feel as if you must state your disagreement with someone else unless it will add to our collective understanding of the topic at hand. I may cut off class discussions if I sense that people are getting too emotional or distracted to benefit further. I will speak to anyone who has become too uncivil or disrespectful and if severe or frequent enough, academic sanctions may follow (including but not limited to penalties to the participation grade).

### *Asking questions about the class*

For questions or concerns that do not require an immediate answer, it is strongly preferred that you speak to me before, during, or after class or during office hours. This is the best way to quickly resolve your question/concern and (if in class) allows me to answer a question a single time for the entire class rather than multiple times individually.

You of course are not required to share personal information in front of the class, so you are always welcome to contact me privately whether in person or via email. You will never be specifically penalized for asking a question over email, but I may simply reply by telling you to talk to me in person if I feel the query will be cumbersome over email.

### *Faculty feedback and response time*

Allow 10-14 days for grades on major assignments, although sometimes you will receive feedback sooner. In general, expect a response to emails within 24 hours on business days. If you haven't gotten a response after a couple of days, feel free to reach out again.

### *Attendance*

Attendance is expected at all class periods. You are entitled to two unexcused absences over the course of the semester with no penalty. Each additional unexcused absence will result in a 30-point penalty to your participation grade. In other words, 7 unexcused absences will result in a 0% participation grade and the best possible course grade would be 70% if you scored perfectly on all other assignments.

I observe university policy regarding excused absences. Sickesses that are acute enough to merit a visit to the doctor are excused with documentation. Travel for athletics or other activities in which you represent Ohio State are also excused with advance notice. Other circumstances will be evaluated on a case by case basis.

### *Diversity*

The School of Communication at The Ohio State University embraces and maintains an environment that respects diverse traditions, heritages, experiences, and people. Our commitment to diversity moves beyond mere tolerance to recognizing, understanding, and welcoming the contributions of diverse groups and the value group members possess as individuals. In our School, the faculty, students, and staff are dedicated to building a tradition of diversity with principles of equal opportunity, personal respect, and the intellectual interests of those who comprise diverse cultures.

## Title IX

Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender are Civil Rights offenses subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories (e.g., race). If you or someone you know has been sexually harassed or assaulted, you may find the appropriate resources at <http://titleix.osu.edu> or by contacting the Ohio State Title IX Coordinator, Kellie Brennan, at [titleix@osu.edu](mailto:titleix@osu.edu)

## Written Assignments

All written work must be typed and must conform to APA formatting, citing, and referencing guidelines (see <http://www.apastyle.org/> and <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>).

Unless otherwise noted, assignments must be uploaded to the dropbox no later than 11:59 p.m. on the assigned due date.

## Academic Misconduct

Cheating and plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. The Ohio State University's Code of Student Conduct (Section 3325-23-04) defines academic misconduct as "any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the University, or subvert the educational process" (p. 2). Examples of academic misconduct include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, collusion (unauthorized collaboration), copying the work of another student, and possession of unauthorized materials during an examination.

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term "academic misconduct" includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct <http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/>.

If I suspect that a student has committed academic misconduct in this course, I am obligated by University Rules to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM). If COAM determines you have violated the University's *Code of Student Conduct*, the sanctions for the misconduct could include a failing grade in this course and suspension or dismissal from the University. If you have any questions about this policy or what constitutes academic misconduct, please contact me or visit <http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>.

## Acknowledgments

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