E58.2232 Language and Culture  
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication  
New York University.

**War and Terrorism: Framing the Politics of Conflict**

Instructor: Remi Brulin, Visiting Research Fellow, PhD La Sorbonne, Paris

**Overview:**

Through the study of several historical cases spanning several decades and various continents, this course will examine the complexities involved in defining the concept of “terrorism” and try to determine how this term has been used in the American political discourse in order to shape public opinion, and frame specific conflicts and policy proposals. As a class, we will try to reflect on the ethical, moral and political questions surrounding the question of “terrorism,” and will examine how the American media has covered or talked or written about “terrorism” through the years. Throughout the semester, we will attempt to remain aware of contemporary events and, as they happen, to study how the media in the US and abroad covers them.

**Required Texts:**

Course packet containing most of the texts mentioned below.

**Assignments and Grading:**

- Project Proposal (probably February 20) .................................................
- Project Draft (probably April 3) ............................................................... 40 %
- Final Project Essay ........................................................... ..........................
- Midterm Exam (probably March 27) ..................................................... 20 %
- Weekly Presentations / Debates Short Weekly Essays ......................... 20 %
- Attendance and Contribution during Classes ........................................... 20 %

**Final Research Paper:**

Each student will produce a 15-20 page long final paper. It must be typewritten, with the student’s name, date, and essay title on the cover page. Consultation of a formal style manual is highly recommended, and plagiarism will not be tolerated (University rules and guidelines can easily be consulted on this subject.) The final paper will be submitted on time, as will the project proposal and the project draft.

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Criteria:

In order to grade your performances as you participate in class discussions, make a presentation, take part in a class debate and write your final research paper, I will determine to what extent you managed to reach the following objectives:

*Evaluating Sources of Information*: The ability to chose from among alternative sources the most reliable and accurate source in relation to a given subject.

*Separating Fact from Opinion*: The ability to make the basic distinction between factual statements (those that can be demonstrated or verified empirically) and statements of opinion – those that are beliefs or attitudes that cannot be proved.

*Identifying Stereotypes*: The ability to identify oversimplified, exaggerated descriptions (favorable or unfavorable) about people and insulting statements about racial, religious or national groups, based upon misinformation or lack of information.

*Recognizing Ethnocentrism*: The ability to recognize attitudes or opinions that express the view that one’s own race, culture, or group is inherently superior, or those attitudes that judge another culture or group in terms of one’s own.

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

The following is a “working schedule.” Class materials are subject to change based on the interests, understanding, and general pace of the class.

**Week 1:**


**Week 2:**

Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, passage on *Jus ad bellum and in bello*.
Boaz Ganor, “Is One Man’s Terrorist Another Man’s Freedom Fighter?”

History of the use of the term “terrorism” in presidential speeches from Roosevelt to Carter (Primary sources: Data from the Papers of the President of the United States.)

**Week 3:**
Robert Kelly, “Is Terrorism Always Wrong?”
Speeches by George Shultz and Ronald Reagan on “terrorism.”

UN General Assembly Debates on self determination and the issue of the use of force in the context of “national liberation struggles.” (Primary sources : data from the UN Archives.)
UN General Assembly Debates on “International Terrorism” in 1972. (Primary sources : data from the UN Archives.)

**Week 4: The Question of “State Terrorism”**

Mark Burgess, CDI, “Terrorism : The Problem of Definition.”
The UN General Assembly Debates on “International Terrorism” from 1972 to now: Does “state terrorism” exist? (Primary sources : data from the UN Archives.)

**Week 5 : The Media and Terrorism**

Daniel Hallin, *The Uncensored War*, p 116-118.
Pippa Norris, *Framing Terrorism*, p 1-16.
CBC News Online, “Terrorists and Freedom Fighters.”

**Week 6 : World War II and “terrorism”**

The Nuremberg Trials and the use of the term “terrorism.” (Primary Sources : Documents from the Nuremberg Trials, accessible online)
President Roosevelt and the “terrorism” of Nazi aerial bombings.
Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*.
Caleb Carr, *The Lessons of Terror*.
Week 7: The Algerian War of Independence.

Self determination, the use of force and terrorism. (Primary Sources: Debates at the UN General Assembly.)
Jonathan Shell, The Unconquerable World, Chapter 3.
George Andreopoulos, The Laws of War, Chapter 11.
DVD: The Battle of Algiers.

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)

Week 8: The Vietnam War:

President Johnson, the Vietcong and “terrorism.” (Primary Sources: The Public Papers of the President.)
Nixon on Vietnam (Primary Sources: The Nixon Tapes).
The US Senate Hearings on the Phoenix Program (Primary Sources: various hearings on the subject.)

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)

Weeks 9: South Africa.

Richard Falk, Functionaries and Revolutionaries.
Johns and Davis, Mandela, Tambo and the African National Congress, Documents.
The US Congress and the ANC in the 1980s: documents on the Anti-Apartheid Act of 1986. (Primary Sources.)
Comparison of the Platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties in 1988: is the ANC a “terrorist organization” or is the South African regime a “terrorist state”? (Primary Sources.)

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)


The Israeli discourse on “international terrorism” at the UN General Assembly in the 1970s. (Primary Sources: UN Archives.)
The two Jonathan Institute conferences on “International Terrorism”: 1979 and 1984. (Primary Sources: Transcripts of all the speeches given during these conferences.)
Transcripts of hearings of the Denton Sub-Committee on International Terrorism.
Transcripts of various Congressional Hearings throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s on conflicts in Central America and the Middle East.
Transcripts of debates on specific pieces of legislation regarding “terrorism.” (Primary Sources: US Government Archives.)
Specific speeches by US Officials (Alexander Haig, George Shultz, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Ronald Reagan, George Bush, Bill Clinton, George Bush, …)
Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports for various Latin American countries. (Primary Sources: UN Documents.)

Richard Falk, Western State Terrorism, p 102-120.
Frederick Gareau, State Terrorism and the United States, selected excerpts.

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)

Week 12: 9/11 and the second ‘War on terrorism’

Main speeches by President Bush and other US officials.
Steve Coll, Ghost Wars, selected excerpts.
Lawrence Wright, The Looming Tower, selected excerpts.
Terrorism : Opposing Viewpoints, 2006, p 70-110.
Jeffrey Record, “Bounding the GWOT.”
Stephen Holmes, The Matador’s Cape, selected excerpts.

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)

Week 13: The ethics of fighting “terrorism.” Civil Liberties. The question of torture.

Terrorism : Opposing Viewpoints, 2006, p 111-149.
Fox TV’s “24” and the question of the “ticking time bomb” scenario. Human Rights First campaign on torture.
Alan Dershowitz, Why Terrorism Works.
Alfred McCoy, A Question of Torture.
Week 14-15: The Middle East:

The two Jonathan Institute conferences on “International Terrorism” : 1979 and 1984. (Primary Sources: Transcripts of all the speeches given during these conferences.)

Transcripts of various Congressional Hearings throughout the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s on the Middle East conflict, and especially on the issue of negotiations with the PLO and the “renunciation of terrorism” condition. (Primary Sources: US Government Archives.)

Sandi Tolan, *The Lemon Tree.*
Yassir Arafat, United Nations General Assembly November 1974 speech.
Lawrence Pintak, *Reflections in a Bloodshot Lens,* Chapter 3.
*DVD: What Arabs Say about Terrorism.*
Alan Dershowitz, *Why Terrorism Works.*
Michael Ledeen, The War against the Terror Masters.
Norman Finkelstein, *Beyond Chutzpah.*

Media coverage of the conflict (ProQuest, Lexis-Nexis.)