

# Political Science 4385: Political Violence and Terrorism

Fall 2020

Online

CRN: 82736

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Dr. Christopher Patane

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**Office Hours:** Remote Only.

Due to COVID-19 I won't be meeting with students in person in my office. However, I will be available by email, over Blackboard, and on my Discord server (see below). Other than late night emails, I should be able to get back to students with questions relatively quickly. I am also more than happy to voice or video call with any student who wants to talk or speak relatively face to face.

## **Course Description**

What makes a terrorist willing to carry out a suicide bombing? Why do people decide to violently rebel against their governments? Are mass shooters in the US really just "mentally ill?"

This course focuses on these questions, and others like them in the social scientific study of political violence. We will focus on the scientific explanations developed for the structure and behavior of insurgencies and terrorist networks, the causes of genocide and mass killings, and the effects of government's responses to these events.

After this class you will understand the major factors that influence genocide, terrorism, and civil war as well as a sense of where the social science literature sits on these topics. While we will reference specific historic and current events throughout the course, this is not a history class. We will focus on the underlying factors that drive these events as understood by the published research.

We will start the semester with a brief overview of political violence as a whole and the social scientific method. Then we will discuss political violence in two broad categories. First, we will look at state generated violence—where governments use force against other governments and their populations. Second, we will look at the varieties of non-state violence—where at least one of the participants of political violence is a private individual or non-governmental group.

## Course Material

**There are no required textbooks for this course.** Instead, readings for each week will be posted as PDFs to the course Blackboard page. Students are responsible for reading the assigned articles during the week they are assigned.

Readings will be accompanied each week by posted outlines that are to be guides to the more complex readings. There will also be brief recordings available to guide thinking for the week.

Each week, you will see a new folder appear in the “Weekly Assignments” section of the course Blackboard page. That folder will have all of the reading assignments you will need for the week, as well as directions and links to the week’s assignments.

## Grading

Your final course grade will be calculated from the following sources:

1. Weekly Journal Notes: 5 points per week
2. Weekly Discussion Board Reflections: 5 points per week
3. Case Study 1: State Political Violence: 50 points
4. Case Study 2: Non-State Political Violence: 50 points

## Weekly Journal Notes

Each week, you will be given a set of guiding questions for a private journal that only you and I can see. These guiding questions will focus on making sure everyone **understands** the main arguments and findings of the assigned readings.

## Weekly Reflections

Each week, students will be expected to make at least one reflection post in a discussion board response to several questions for the week. This is where students will **apply** the ideas and concepts in the week’s content. Responses **must** be at least a paragraph and directly back up their thoughts with something from the assigned readings. These will only be seen by the writer and the course instructor, and students are free to criticize or supplement the week’s readings with their own thoughts.

## Case Studies

Understanding political violence requires the ability to either observe the general trends we discuss or isolate anomalous cases in real events of political violence. There will be two small projects that will allow you to focus on these specific cases. For each project, you will be responsible for choosing a specific event or group that relates to the topic currently under discussion in class. You will then have to carry

out some background research on the case from acceptable sources and produce a 3-5-page (double spaced) paper on the topic and whether the existing research adequately explains your case or not. For example, if you choose to do a case study on ISIL you can discuss how their structure is explained (or not) by current research or focus your study on their behavior and how it is addressed by the literature on political violence. All assignments will be posted and turned in on the course Blackboard page.

Because we will be discussing some specific cases in class, I encourage you to use these papers as an opportunity to apply the class discussions to cases not mentioned in weekly readings or assignments. To that end, I will provide some general lists of cases in the directions for each case study. You are free to choose any of those, a case mentioned in course content, or to choose one we haven't talked about.

## **Grading Scale**

A: 90-100

B: 80-89

C: 70-79

D: 60-69

F: Below 60

## **Blackboard**

All communication for this course will be conducted via the course's Blackboard site and University email. Any supplementary material, assignments, or changes to the course structure will be made available on this site. Each student should ensure that they have access to these materials and are able to receive emails through their student account. Please note that I cannot accept or respond to student emails that come from a non-university address.

## **Discord**

In addition to email and Blackboard, I am using Discord to provide a place where students and I can meet, exchange instant messages, talk over voice/video, and stream. It is entirely free and provides a less formal environment where students can talk to each other or to me.

To set up an account on the Discord server:

Visit <https://discordapp.com/>

If you don't already have an account, click the "Register" button.

Once your account is created (please keep your username class/work appropriate), click on this link: <https://discord.gg/Q3W6FJD> and you should automatically be sent to the server.

The service will run fine on a web browser, so there is no need to download any software. If you would like to download the app to use on your phone or home computers, the site has apps available for most platforms.

Once you are on the server, you will see that there are text and voice “channels” for each of my classes this semester. You are free to look in, chat with, and generally interact with the students in classes that are not your own—this is an informal and open space. There are also a number of text and voice chat rooms available as “Student Study Spaces” where groups of you can work together.

## **Information and University Policies**

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

All students are expected to engage in all academic pursuits in a manner that is above reproach. Students are expected to maintain honesty and integrity in the academic experiences both in and out of the classroom. Any student found guilty of dishonesty in any phase of academic work will be subject to disciplinary action. The University and its official representatives may initiate disciplinary proceedings against a student accused of any form of academic dishonesty including but not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work which is to be submitted, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource materials. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: [http://www.shsu.edu/~slo\\_www/](http://www.shsu.edu/~slo_www/)

### **Student Absences on Religious Holy Days Policy:**

Section 51.911(b) of the Texas Education Code requires that an institution of higher education excuse a student from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. Section 51.911 (a) (2) defines a religious holy day as: “a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20....” A student whose absence is excused under this subsection may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused within a reasonable time after the absence.

University policy 861001 provides the procedures to be followed by the student and instructor. A student desiring to absent himself/herself from a scheduled class in order to observe (a) religious holy day(s) shall present to each instructor involved a written statement concerning the religious holy day(s). The instructor will complete a form notifying the student of a reasonable timeframe in which the missed assignments and/or examinations are to be completed. For a complete listing of the university policy, see: <http://www.shsu.edu/dept/academic-affairs/documents/aps/students/861001.pdf>

### **Students with Disabilities Policy:**

It is the policy of Sam Houston State University that individuals otherwise qualified shall not be excluded, solely by reason of their disability, from participation in any academic program of the university. Further, they shall not be denied the benefits of these programs nor shall they be subjected to discrimination. Students with disabilities that might affect their academic performance should register with the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities located in the Lee Drain Annex (telephone 936-294-3512, TDD 936-294-3786, and e-mail [disability@shsu.edu](mailto:disability@shsu.edu)). They should then make

arrangements with their individual instructors so that appropriate strategies can be considered and helpful procedures can be developed to ensure that participation and achievement opportunities are not impaired.

SHSU adheres to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that may affect adversely your work in this class, then I encourage you to register with the SHSU Services for Students with Disabilities and to talk with me about how I can best help you. All disclosures of disabilities will be kept strictly confidential. NOTE: No accommodation can be made until you register with the Services for Students with Disabilities. For a complete listing of the university policy, see:

<http://www.shsu.edu/dotAsset/7ff819c3-39f3-491d-b688-db5a330ced92.pdf>

### **Visitors in the Classroom:**

Only registered students may attend class. Exceptions can be made on a case-by-case basis by the professor. In all cases, visitors must not present a disruption to the class by their attendance. Students wishing to audit a class must apply to do so through the Registrar's Office.

### **Copyright on Lecture and Course Materials**

Copyright 2020 (Christopher Patane) as to this syllabus and all lectures. During this course, students are prohibited from selling notes or being paid for taking notes by any person or commercial firm without the express written permission of the instructor teaching this course.

### **Emergencies, Crises, and Mental Health**

Sometimes the study of Political Science involves dealing with difficult material. In some cases, these may reflect or reference your own personal, family, or group experiences. Other times, life events may interfere with your ability to succeed in class. We do not want to neglect our own health or well-being. If you need support, the Counseling Center can be reached at 936-294-1720. The [website](#) also contains self-help resources, and those services available in the Huntsville community.

As with all other parts of the course, students are welcome and encouraged to come talk to me to voice their concerns, seek support, or discuss accommodation for coursework after a crisis.

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### **Class Outline, Schedule**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. Changes will be announced in class, through email, and on the course Blackboard site. It is the responsibility of the student to take note of any changes.

**Week 1: August 17-21**

Course Introduction

**Week 2: August 24-28**

How do we Define Political Violence?

**Week 3: August 31-September 4**

The Social Science of Political Violence

**Week 4: September 7- 11**

State Violence: Repression

**Week 5: September 14-18:**

State Violence: Repression Continued

**Week 6: September 21-25:**

State Violence: Non-violent Repression

**Week 7: September 28-October 2:**

State Violence: Genocide and Mass Killing

**Week 8: October 5-9:**

State and Nonstate Violence: Civil Wars

Friday, October 9, First Case Study due at 11:59pm

**Week 9: October 12-16:**

Nonstate Violence: Terrorist Organizations

**Week 10: October 19- 23:**

Nonstate Violence: Causes of Terrorism

**Week 11: October 26- 30:**

Nonstate Violence: Does Terrorism Work?

**Week 12: November 2- November 6:**

Nonstate Violence: Who Becomes a Terrorist?

**Week 13: November 9-13**

Nonstate Violence: Female Terrorism

**Week 14: November 16-20:**

Nonstate Violence: Lone Wolf Terrorism

**Week 15 & 16: November 23 -December 9:**

Nonstate Violence: Suicide Terrorism

Nov 25-27 Thanksgiving Break

**Wednesday, December 9, Second Case Study due at 11:59pm**