

**Cedar Crest College
Honors Program
Fall 2008**

History/Honors 278. Terror: The History of an Idea

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Plague treatises were books written in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries by physicians and clerics trying to explain to their contemporaries what had caused the plagues that attacked Europe and how to cope with them. Some blamed the sinfulness of the victims, others blamed infidels like Muslims and Jews....One author, John of Paris, wrote at the beginning of the fourteenth century that we might never know what truly caused the plague. Today, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, global terrorism is not much better understood than the plague was then.

—Philip Bobbitt, *Terror and Consent: The Wars of the Twenty-First Century*

This course seeks to provide a historical, sociological, and cultural context to the phenomenon of terror as it is understood in today's world. The course will explore the different meanings that the words "terror," "terrorism," and "terrorist" have in the last two or three centuries. This is not a course in political science, international affairs, national security, or criminology, although all these disciplines are well-represented in the rapidly growing field of "terrorism studies." Instead, this course asks students to explore the historical origins of "terror" as an idea, the different forms "terrorism" has taken in the modern world, and the efforts "terrorists" have made to explain their actions. We will also look at the representations of "terror" that have been made in literature, art, and film, some of which are included in this syllabus..



Does It Start with the Bible?—Caravaggio's Painting of Judith Slaying the Tyrant Holofernes (Palazzo Barberini, Rome).
<<http://www.wga.hu/art/c/caravagg/03/17judit.jpg>>

Course Objectives

By taking this course, students can expect to learn the following:

1. that terrorism, far from being the “weapon of the powerless,” has often been used by those in power as an instrument for control, repression, and punishment;
2. that the methods and weapons used by terrorists may have changed over the last few centuries, but the strategies, ideologies, and rationalizations behind the practice of terror have remained much the same;
3. that there is nothing particularly new, other than contemporary weaponry and technology, about the idea of “mass” or “indiscriminate” terror;
4. that historians, in trying to understand the phenomenon of “terrorism,” must borrow heavily from other scholarly disciplines, notably psychology, sociology, and comparative political science;
5. that artistic and literary efforts to penetrate the “mind of the terrorist” are frequently more enlightening than traditional scholarly approaches;
6. that there is such a thing as a “culture of terror,” and that it has manifested itself in many places and at many times, long before September 11, 2001.



Vincenzo Camuccini, *The Death of Caesar*, 1793-98 (Vatican Museums)—Is Political Murder Ever a Legitimate Act?
<<http://www.utexas.edu/courses/lat311moore/LAT311images/lat311images2/camuccini.jpg>>

Other course outcomes include a greater knowledge of the scholarly and popular literature on terrorism, an appreciation of film as a medium for the communication of urgent and controversial issues, a greater degree of expertise in reading and critically reviewing works of serious scholarship, an increased ability in identifying and evaluating bodies of information available through electronic sources, and more classroom experience in oral presentation, argument, and debate. While not specific to this course, the latter skills should prove valuable across a broad range of disciplines.

Assessment

Your progress in achieving these course outcomes will be measured as follows:

1. by attendance, demonstrated interest, and participation in class discussion—the latter in particular will serve to establish your completion of the assigned readings and mastery of the course subject matter (25 percent of your grade);
2. by a Mid-Term Exam—to accomplish the same purposes (25 percent of your grade);
3. by completing a critical review of a scholarly monograph, to be presented orally in class and submitted as a Word document through e-mail—to strengthen your skills in the critical evaluation of historical evidence and interpretation, your skills in oral presentation, and your writing skills (25 percent of your grade);
4. by a Final Exam—as a final demonstration of your accomplishment of the course objectives (25 percent of your grade).

The Critical Review

For purposes of clarification, a monograph is not a textbook or a general account. Instead, it is a study supported by original research that presents an argument or interpretation explaining a particular political, social, or cultural phenomenon. The monographs from which you can choose appear below, with the weeks when the oral presentations are due. Selection is on a first-come, first-served basis. Inform me, please, of the book you select so that I can schedule things accordingly. We will discuss how you should read the book you choose, write the review, and prepare your class report. The written review should be submitted at the same time as the presentation and will be returned with a grade.



The First Instance of Modern “Terror”—A Still Photo from [La Révolution Française](http://www.freinet.org/creactif/moulin/EXPOSES/HISTOIRE/REVOLTE/IMREVOLT/revolt36.JPG). Directed by Richard Heffron, 1989.
<<http://www.freinet.org/creactif/moulin/EXPOSES/HISTOIRE/REVOLTE/IMREVOLT/revolt36.JPG>>

Readings

There is no textbook for this course, for the simple reason that an adequate one has not yet been written. My (extensive) notes on the E-Companion site for this course will serve as the text.

In addition, the following are required:

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Devils, Penguin Classics paperback, 0141440356

Joseph Conrad, The Secret Agent, Penguin Classics paperback, 0141441580

André Malraux, Man's Fate, Vintage paperback, 0679725741

Schedule of Class Sessions

Week I
25.08/27.08

Course Organization

Reading: Begin reading Dostoyevsky, The Devils

Week II
01.09/03.09

Background: "Terror" from Classical Antiquity to the Early Modern World

No Class 01.09

Week III
08.09/10.09

The First Modern Terror: The French Revolution



Ilya Repin, *The Arrest of a Propagandist*, 1880-1892 (Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow)—In the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century Members of the Russian Intelligentsia Created the Stereotype of the “Professional Revolutionary.”
<<http://www.abcgallery.com/R/repin/repin76.JPG>>

Week IV
15.09/17.09

The Theory and Practice of Terror in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries

Reading: Finish The Devils by this week. Then begin The Secret Agent.

Reports: Anna Geifman, Thou Shalt Kill: Revolutionary Terrorism in Russia, 1894-1917 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993)

Richard Pipes, The Degaev Affair: Terror and Treason in Tsarist Russia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003)

Tom Goyens, Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007)

James Green, Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement, and the Bombing That Divided Gilded Age America (New York: Pantheon, 2006)



“Propaganda by the Deed”—An Assassination Attempt in Moscow in the Final Years before World War I.
A Still Photo from The Rider Named Death, Directed by Karen Shakhnazarov, 2004.
<<http://www.cinemastrikesback.com/news/reviews/ridernameddeath5.jpg>>

Week V
22.09/24.09

Film: The Rider Named Death, dir. Karen Shakhnazarov, 2004, 100 minutes

Discussion

Week VI
29.09/01.10

“Dynamite Is My Religion”—Left-Wing and Right-Wing Terror in the Spanish Civil War

Reading: Finish The Secret Agent this week, then begin Man’s Fate.

Reports: Jerome Mintz, The Anarchists of Casas Viejas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982)

Julius Ruiz, Franco’s Justice: Repression in Madrid after the Spanish Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Week VII
06.10/08.10

“The Great Terror” in the Soviet Union

Reports: J. Arch Getty and Oleg V. Naumov, The Road to Terror: Stalin and the Self-Destruction of the Old Bolsheviks, 1932-1939 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999)

Marc Jansen and Nikita Petrov, Stalin’s Loyal Executioner: People’s Commissar Nikolai Ezhov, 1895-1940 (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2002)

Donald Rayfield, Stalin and His Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him (New York: Random House, 2004)

Robert W. Thurston, Life and Terror in Stalin’s Russia, 1934-1941 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996)

Sheila Fitzpatrick, Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times—Soviet Russia in the 1930s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)

J. Arch Getty, Yezhov: The Rise of Stalin’s “Iron Fist” (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008)

Week VIII
13.10/15.10

Fall Break. No Class on Wednesday. Use Your Time to Complete the Mid-Term Exam Due No Later than 4 PM, Friday, 17.10 (by E-Mail)



Pablo Picasso, Guernica, 1937 (The Prado, Madrid)—Painted to Protest the Bombing of the Basque Town by German Pilots Sent to Spain to Support the Nationalist Side in the Civil War. Until September 11, 2001, Perhaps Our Best Known Image of “Terror.”
<<http://www.terra.es/personal/asg00003/picasso/grguer2.jpg>>

Week IX
20.10/22.10

Anti-Colonial Revolt, Wars of National Liberation, Terror, and Counter-Terror

Reading: Man’s Fate should be finished by now. Although it is set in the 1920s, Malraux’s portrait of revolutionary politics in China anticipates some aspects of the anti-colonial rebellions that followed World War II.

Film: The Battle of Algiers, dir. Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966, 120 minutes

Discussion

- Week X
27.10/29.10
- Political Terror in Europe, the Middle East, and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s
- Reports: Richard Drake, The Revolutionary Mystique and Terrorism in Contemporary Italy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989)
- Richard English, Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- Michael Wieviorka, The Making of Terrorism, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)—assigned sections only
- Week XI
03.11/05.11
- Film: The Legend of Rita, dir. Volker Schlöndorff, 2000, 100 minutes
- Discussion
- Week XII
10.11/12.11
- American Terrorists: From the Mad Bomber to the Unabomber, from the Weather Underground to the White Aryan Resistance
- Reports: Jeremy Varon, Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground and the Red Army Faction in the Sixties and Seventies (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004)
- Michael Barkun, Religion and the Racist Right: The Origins of the Christian Identity Movement (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
- Kenneth S. Stern, A Force upon the Plain: The American Militia Movement and the Politics of Hate (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997)
- Mark S. Hamm, In Bad Company: America's Terrorist Underground (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2001)
- Week XIII
17.11/19.12
- Film: The Weather Underground, dir. Sam Green and Bill Siegel, 2002, 90 minutes
- Discussion
- Week XIV
22.11/24.11
- No Classes—Wednesday is already a Holiday**
- Week XV
01.12/03.12
- The World We Live In: “Clash of Civilizations,” “Ethnic Cleansing,” “War on Terror”
- Reports: Norman M. Naimark, Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000)
- Eric D. Weitz, A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- Michael Mann, The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
- Paul Berman, Terror and Liberalism (New York: Norton, 2003)

Final Exam



Mothers Mourn their Children after the Terrorist Attack on a School in Beslan in September 2004. In the Battle between Russian Security Forces and Chechen Separatists Who Had Invaded the School, Over 300 People, Mostly Children, Were Killed. <http://www.andina.com.pe/FotosAfp/documentos/fotos/100000119_RUSSIA-BESLAN-HOSTAGES-MOURN.jpg>

College Policies

Classroom Protocol: Each student has the right to a learning environment free of interruptions, distractions, and inconsiderate or uncivil behavior. Accordingly, cell phones and all other electronic/digital entertainment sources are to be turned off during class.

Honor Philosophy: This course is conducted in accord with the College Honor Philosophy, as detailed in the Student's Guide for 2008-09. All work you submit in this course must be original, including answers and essays on tests and exams. Any instance of academic dishonesty may result in an "F" for the course.

Documented Learning Disability: Please refer to the Student's Guide for 2008-09 for the resources the College makes available to assist students. If special accommodations are needed in class, you should discuss these with me in the first two weeks of the semester. I will be happy to cooperate in ensuring the best possible arrangements for a positive learning experience in this course.

Attendance at the Final Examination: Your obligations for this course include attendance at the final exam, on the day and time scheduled by the Registrar's Office. Do not make travel arrangements until the final exam schedule is published.

A Note about Next Semester

For students who wish to pursue the subject of "terror," I suggest you consider taking History/Politics 275, Nationalism and Fundamentalism, with Dr. Spiezio, next spring. You should have the background to get maximum benefit from the course.