

Course Information

Course Number: GEOG 420
Course Title: Geography of Terrorism
Section: 500
Time: MWF 11:30-12:20
Location: CSA 302
Credit Hours: 3

Instructor Details

Instructor: Erik Prout
Office: CSA 301-C
Phone: 458-3379
E-Mail: geographyprof@tamu.edu
Office Hours: M 12:30-1:30 & F after class

Course Description

The events of September 11th, 2001 as well as New Years Day, 2025 brought modern terrorism into the everyday life of most Americans with powerful visual images and as the topic of ordinary conversations. In reality, terrorism has been a part of international relations for last century, and other forms of control, coercion, and resistance have been equally violent and historically present. As the United States pursues a War on Terror(ism) and interacts with other States as a preeminent military power, the academic community should respond and discuss the topic in light of our different backgrounds and points of view.

The Geography of Terrorism (GEOG 420) is a course that examines the current and historical geographies of terrorism at various scales, multiple regions, and differing interpretations. Three themes of inquiry are:

- (1) Defining terrorism across geographical space,
- (2) Using geographical approaches such as regions and proximity to elaborate a better understanding of terrorism, and
- (3) Assessing and discussing of individual threats, personal obligations, and collective/citizen responses, which by extension policy ramifications for the American government.

The first theme tackles the definition of terrorism with examples from around the world and even different segments of the federal government. In addition to politico-legal definitions, there are aspects of mass-media society dealing with terminology and ordinary people understanding complex events through media hype and misinformation. The perspective of place in tragic events is explored, and how we memorialize sites of violence such as the World Trade Center memorial.

The second theme utilizes the concept of a region, particularly a cultural region, and explores whether a regional geography of terrorism exists. Using core-periphery as a guide, a comparison can be made between the reported terrorist activities with popular American perceptions of the world.

The third theme allows the students to explore questions of what we should do about terrorism. The topics include personal safety, collective responses to acts of terrorism, physical security around specific places, and government policy towards identifiable actors that commit and support terrorism

Course Prerequisites

The prerequisite for this course is upper level standing. Only Juniors and Seniors will be allowed to enroll in GEOG 420 without instructor permission.

Course Learning Outcomes

The successful outcome of this course, which is my goal, is to

- (1) facilitate your understanding of global terrorism through the use of various geographical inquiries,
- (2) increase your knowledge and proficiency of the various international terrorist hotspots,
- (3) develop a dialogue of "terrorism" that incorporates physical security and counter-measures,
- (4) convey the importance of intellectual pursuits that construct geographical places, regions, and ideas.

Textbook and/or Resource Materials

The following resources will be REQUIRED to successfully pass this course.

- (1) The 9/11 Commission Report: (*various*) ISBN# 9780393340136 (e-book at Library)
- (2) Access to Howdy/Canvas for official email, readings, etc.

Optional Materials: The Geographical Dimensions of Terrorism, S. Cutter et al eds. Routledge, 2003. ISBN# 0415946425

Grading Policy

I use a total point scheme for grading. Every examination and exercise has a set value of points, and the final grade is determined from the total number of points accumulated from all of the evaluations. I set the point/grade thresholds only after evaluating the whole class and the point distribution. The percent breakdowns and general descriptions of the evaluations are as follows:

Research Project: The goal is to have you design and conduct significant research, which you should be proud of afterwards. The research paper will be 10-15 pages of writing (excluding figures and maps) and must be on an approved topic. The research papers will be electronically submitted through an anti-plagiarism website, TurnItIn.com, as well as a hard copy by the due date.

Preparation deadlines	50 points
Research paper	400 points
Oral presentation	50 points

Participation: Participation is an essential part of the course and grade. There will be group activities and class discussion that require everybody's contribution; therefore attendance becomes an essential part of the course. You'll need to keep up with the weekly readings. Weekly "Reaction" write ups will be due every Friday before discussions; selected students will help lead the discussions. Excused absences are by university policy!

Weekly reaction write-ups (10 max)	300 points
Attendance & discussion	200 points

The final grade is determined by the number of points accumulated. I reserve the right to adjust (curve) the grade thresholds at the end of the semester. With no adjustments, the course grades are issued as such:

A	900-1000 points	work that is excellent
B	800-899	work is above average
C	700-799	work that is average performance
D	600-699	work is below average (still a pass)
F	< 600 points	work that does not merit credit.

Late Work Policy

Excused absences are by university policy! Any examination date or due-date missed is a tentative zero (see schedule). Exam day emergencies require immediate notification (a phone call or email to me, the Department of Geography, or an appropriate university official) and written verification of emergency promptly to my office. General deductions are 10% per unexcused day late.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance is a key factor in academic performance and becomes a crucial component to your success during the semester. Attendance is required for this course. Unexcused absences will count against you.

Course Schedule

General concept of classtime:

- Mondays—Lecture & activities
- Wednesdays — Discussion & activities
- Fridays—Discussion/Debate & Reactions (write ups)

Week One

- Defining Terrorism
- Who are you & what are you fearful of? **Introductory Write-up**

Week Two

- M 1/20 no class
- Characterization of Modern Terrorism
- Reaction Write-up 1

Week Three

- Root Causes of Terrorism
- Reaction Write-up 2
- [Research Topic Idea / research question]**

Week Four

- Geographical Scales of Terrorism
 - Reaction Write-up 3
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Week Five

Terrorism and Regions

Reaction Write-up 4

[Research Topic Approval / initial bibliography]**Week Six**

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Reaction Write-up 5

Week Seven

Counter-Terrorism 1 (global)

Reaction Write-up 6

Week Eight

Counter-Terrorism 2 (local)

MAP QUIZ; Reaction Write-up 7

Week Nine – Spring Break (no class or office hours)**Week Ten**

Weapons of Concern—what to worry about & defend against

Reaction Write-up 8

[Research: outline & bibliography]

DEBATE 1: Group A (pro) / Group B (con)

Week Eleven

– AAG conference (no class or office hours)

Reaction Write-up 9

Week Twelve

Homeland Security Department: too far or not enough?

DEBATE 2: Group C (pro) / Group D (con)

Week Thirteen

Reaction Write-up 10

Week Fourteen**Research Papers Due Wednesday, April 16**

– F 4/18 no class

Week Fifteen

RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS

Week Sixteen

Research presentations, Course Conclusion / Course Evaluations

revisions and make-ups prior to final exam schedule (T 5/6 10:30)

Traditionally Delivered Course – This is not an online or remote course, and we will only use those delivery methods if the university declares that the public health situation (e.g. pandemic) requires it. This is not a typical course with lecture and exams. Students and instructors are engaged in exploration, discovery of source materials, and collegial style discussions. While we are striving for a seminar experience, a daily roll sheet will be used to accurately measure attendance.

Technology Support – Use university support services for Canvas and Howdy, and use Geoscience Help for any issues with GIS labs, etc.

Writing Support – Use library support services: University Writing Center and Research consultants if appropriate.

University Policies

The TAMU Faculty Senate established the wording of these policies.

Attendance Policy

The university views class attendance and participation as an individual student responsibility. Students are expected to attend class and to complete all assignments.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about excused absences, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Makeup Work Policy

Students will be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Student Rule 7, or other reason deemed appropriate by the instructor.

Please refer to [Student Rule 7](#) in its entirety for information about makeup work, including definitions, and related documentation and timelines.

Absences related to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 may necessitate a period of more than 30 days for make-up work, and the timeframe for make-up work should be agreed upon by the student and instructor" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.1](#)).

"The instructor is under no obligation to provide an opportunity for the student to make up work missed because of an unexcused absence" ([Student Rule 7, Section 7.4.2](#)).

Students who request an excused absence are expected to uphold the Aggie Honor Code and Student Conduct Code. (See [Student Rule 24](#).)

Academic Integrity Statement and Policy

"An Aggie does not lie, cheat or steal, or tolerate those who do."

"Texas A&M University students are responsible for authenticating all work submitted to an instructor. If asked, students must be able to produce proof that the item submitted is indeed the work of that student. Students must keep appropriate records at all times. The inability to authenticate one's work, should the instructor request it, may be sufficient grounds to initiate an academic misconduct case" ([Section 20.1.2.3, Student Rule 20](#)).

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You can learn more about the Aggie Honor System Office Rules and Procedures, academic integrity, and your rights and responsibilities at aggiehonor.tamu.edu.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy

Texas A&M University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. If you experience barriers to your education due to a disability or think you may have a disability, please contact the Disability Resources office on your campus (resources listed below). Disabilities may include, but are not limited to attentional, learning, mental health, sensory, physical, or chronic health conditions. All students are encouraged to discuss their disability related needs with Disability Resources and their instructors as soon as possible.

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Disability Resources is located in the Student Services Building or at (979) 845-1637 or visit disability.tamu.edu.

Title IX and Statement on Limits to Confidentiality

Texas A&M University is committed to fostering a learning environment that is safe and productive for all. University policies and federal and state laws prohibit gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

With the exception of some medical and mental health providers, all university employees (including full and part-time faculty, staff, paid graduate assistants, student workers, etc.) are Mandatory Reporters and must report to the Title IX Office if the employee experiences, observes, or becomes aware of an incident that meets the following conditions (see [University Rule 08.01.01.M1](#)):

- The incident is reasonably believed to be discrimination or harassment.
- The incident is alleged to have been committed by or against a person who, at the time of the incident, was (1) a student enrolled at the University or (2) an employee of the University.

Mandatory Reporters must file a report regardless of how the information comes to their attention – including but not limited to face-to-face conversations, a written class assignment or paper, class discussion, email, text, or social media post. Although Mandatory Reporters must file a report, in most instances, a person who is subjected to the alleged conduct will be able to control how the report is handled, including whether or not to pursue a formal investigation. The University's goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and to ensure access to the resources you need.

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Students wishing to discuss concerns in a confidential setting are encouraged to make an appointment with [Counseling and Psychological Services](#) (CAPS).

Students can learn more about filing a report, accessing supportive resources, and navigating the Title IX investigation and resolution process on the University's [Title IX webpage](#).

Statement on Mental Health and Wellness

Texas A&M University recognizes that mental health and wellness are critical factors that influence a student's academic success and overall wellbeing. Students are encouraged to engage in healthy self-care by utilizing available resources and services on your campus

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Students who need someone to talk to can contact Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) or call the TAMU Helpline (979-845-2700) from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. weekdays and 24 hours on weekends. 24-hour emergency help is also available through the National Suicide Prevention Hotline (800-273-8255) or at suicidepreventionlifeline.org.

Campus-Specific, College, and Departmental Policies
College of Arts and Sciences and Department of Geography

College of Arts and Sciences and Geography Department currently do not have any additional policies and minimum syllabus requirements. The Geography Department is on the 8th floor of the O&M Building; the Geoscience Career Center, Geography Academic Advisor, and Environmental Programs Academic Advisor are on the first floor of the O&M Building. College of Arts and Sciences and its advisors, helpers, etc. are in the Academic Building.

AI policy – The fast-changing landscape of Generative AI has necessitated my inclusion of policies that will likely evolve. For the weekly "Reactions", No use of Artificial Intelligence and/or large language models! You must submit Reactions as an unaltered writing sample that only uses basic text processing abilities such as spell check. Use of a third-party software such as *Grammarly* is acceptable.

The use of Generative AI is allowed for the research, but not necessarily encouraged or required. If you engage with generative and/or other Artificial Intelligence programs, Your AI usage must be cited in your sources with exact and detailed parameters of the interactions. Save all the transcripts and versions you use, and be prepared to submit them to instructor on request. Failure to provide drafts and accountability for AI could proceed to honor code investigation.

Statement on the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

FERPA is a federal law designed to protect the privacy of educational records by limiting access to these records, to establish the right of students to inspect and review their educational records and to provide guidelines for the correction of inaccurate and misleading data through informal and formal hearings. Currently enrolled students wishing to withhold any or all directory information items may do so by going to howdy.tamu.edu and clicking on the "Directory Hold Information" link in the Student Records channel on the MyRecord tab. The complete [FERPA Notice to Students](#) and the student records policy is available on the Office of the Registrar webpage.

Items that can never be identified as public information are a student's social security number, citizenship, gender, grades, GPR or class schedule. All efforts will be made in this class to protect your privacy and to ensure confidential treatment of information associated with or generated by your participation in the class.

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Reaction Write-up 1

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Root Causes of Terrorism
Reaction Write-up 2
[Research Topic Idea / research question]

Week Four

Geographical Scales of Terrorism
Reaction Write-up 3

Week Five

Terrorism and Regions
Reaction Write-up 4
[Research Topic Approval / initial bibliography]

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Weapons of Mass Destruction
Reaction Write-up 5

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