

History of Islam and the Politics of Terror

History 4650
2009-2010

Instructor: Marion Boulby
Office: Lady Eaton College, S101.1
Tel: 748-1011 (ext.7837)
Email: marionboulby@trentu.ca
Office hours: Thursday, 1-2pm or by appointment.

Seminar: Wednesday, 7-9 pm, history department seminar room.

Course Description

This seminar examines the history of 20th and 21st century Islamist movements in the context of terrorism. Topics covered include the challenges of defining terror, Islamic perspectives on terror, the debate over the "clash of civilizations", the historical development of Middle East based Islamist extremist movements in a variety of national/transnational settings, recruitment to and appeal of Islamist movements, the significance of 9/11 and the war on terror six years later.

Although the seminar readings and discussion will focus on the Middle East, students are free to write their research papers on the history of Islam and terror in other regions of the world.

Required Texts:

The following are available at Titles bookstore, George St.
Canadian Scholars' Press Course Package #10511
Jonathan Barker, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Terrorism*
Gilles Kepel, *Jihad, the Trail of Political Islam*
Tamara Sonn, *A Brief History of Islam*

Course Structure

The fall term is dedicated to reading and discussion. Class will meet weekly except for the second class which will meet after two weeks. For each class two or three students will be responsible for leading the seminar discussion, incorporating my suggested questions and any further ones. The discussion leaders submit their comments and discussion questions to me the day before the seminar. These can be submitted in informal outline format. Additionally all students submit four reading responses during the term (1000-1500 words). A reading response for the first seminar is compulsory;

you may choose the remaining three excluding the topic on which you will lead your seminar. These reading responses should be submitted as formally written assignments and not as outlines.

The winter term will be devoted to research and class presentations with considerable breaks from class to allow you to work on your papers in consultation with me. Students will read the first draft of each other's papers in order to enable discussion.

Evaluation

Seminar leader	10%
Seminar participation	10%
Reading Responses	20%
Paper Proposal	10%
First Draft	20%
Final Paper	30%

Policies for Due Dates. Extensions for assignments will be given only in cases of documented illness or extraordinary circumstances. If you cannot meet the deadline the penalty is 5% a day. Late assignments will not be accepted more than a week after the due date without documentation.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a zero grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself-unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly advised to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more – www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.

Access to Instruction: It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109; 748-1281; disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Seminar Schedule and Reading Assignments

The seminar will meet every week in the first term **except for the second meeting which takes place after two weeks.** Please note that the class of **November 25 is cancelled** as I will be attending a conference.

Sept. 16 ***Introduction***

Sept. 30 ***Islam, History, Jihad and Terror***

Read: Tamara Sonn and Jonathan Barker and CSPI #1.

1. What challenges do we face in defining terror?
2. How does Barker define terror? Do you agree/disagree with his definition?
3. What is the role of “actions” in Barker’s definition?
4. What are the features of state terrorism according to Barker?
5. How do Sonn and Noorani challenge many stereotypes of Islam as a religion of extremism and violence?
6. Discuss different interpretations of jihad.
7. Why does Sonn argue that the twentieth century was disastrous for the Muslim world?
8. How did the effects of colonialism challenge the Muslim world?
9. What are some themes of Islamic reformism?
10. What was the defensive and utopian form of Islamic discourse that developed in the second half of the twentieth century and how has it been related to acts of terror.
11. What “three big ideas” are cited by Barker as used in explaining terrorism? What flaws does he find with these?
12. Is the war on terror working?

Oct. 7 ***Clash of Civilizations? Roots of Muslim Rage?***

Read: CSPI #s 2, 3, 4,5,6,7.

1. What is the basis of Huntington’s theory of the clash of civilizations?
2. How does Bernard Lewis explain “this is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage”?
3. From what perspectives do Ajami, Said and Chomsky challenge this theory?
4. What does Carroll see as the perils of the “Bush crusade”?

Oct.14 ***Modern Roots of Islamist Extremism***

Read: Kepel, 23-105, CSPI #s8, 9.

1. "Modern Islamist ideology did not materialize in a vacuum" (Kepel, 24). What are some benchmarks in its development from the 1920s onwards discussed by Kepel?
2. Discuss the ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood, Mawdudi, Qutb and Khomeini and their contributions to the development of militant Islamism.
3. According to Kepel, what went wrong with Sadat's "gamble"?
4. What are the basic principles of Qutb's ideology and what is his significance in the development of militant Islamism?
5. How do you interpret Qutb's reaction to Greeley, Colorado?

Oct. 21, NO CLASS READING WEEK.

Oct.28 ***Iranian Revolution and its Legacy***

Read Kepel, 106-135, CSPI #s10-17

1. Discuss Halliday's argument for the originality of the Iranian revolution.
2. What factors contributed to the Iranian revolution?
3. Discuss the "ripple effect" of the Iranian revolution.
4. Discuss relations between Iran and the US under the Bush administration.
5. What does Sohrabi have to say about Ahmadinejad?
6. How do you react to the "Morris" approach of "using bombs to stave off war"?
7. Would war against Iran be justifiable to prevent it from "getting the bomb"? If so, how?
8. What are the future prospects of US-Iran relations under the Obama administration?

Nov.4 ***From Afghani Mujahideen to Taliban Jihad, bin Laden and the War against the West***

Read: Kepel, 136-150, 205-236, 299-322, CSPI #18-25

1. How is it argued that in the case of Osama bin Laden the US "helped midwife a terrorist"?
2. What is your impression of bin Laden's ideology?

3. Why is Afghanistan referred to as the “Graveyard of Empires”?
4. Discuss the development of the jihad in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion.
5. Lane Aker speaks of a “conceptual gap” in some Canadians’ understanding of contemporary peacemaking. Explain his argument. Do you agree or disagree with it?
6. Quoting the *Winnipeg Free Press*: “If, however, we believe it is a war worth fighting, if freedom and rights and security matter as much today for Afghans as they did for Europeans 65 years ago, if fascism dressed in Islamist robes is as evil today as it was when it dressed in jackboots 65 years ago, then the coffins, the body count, are not the issue except in terms of the tears we shed. Today, as back then, we should fight so that small nations such as Afghanistan –and Canada—can be free.” Discuss this quote.
7. Should we stay or should we go? Discuss Canada’s role in the “war on terror”.

Nov. 11 *Shia and Sunni Islamists against Israel*

Read: Kepel, 150-158, CSPI#27-40

1. What is the relationship between Hizballah and Iran?
2. What is the program of Hizballah?
3. Is it correct to see Hizballah as essentially a terrorist organization?
4. What was Hizballah’s role in the war with Israel in 2006?
5. Discuss the historical context and stages of Hamas’ development.
6. How can the Hamas victory in Palestinian 2006 legislative elections be explained?
7. Do you agree with the Canadian and almost world wide boycott of the Hamas government?
8. Can we understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a microcosm of the “war on terror”?
9. How does the emergence of Hamas women challenge stereotypes of Islamist women?

Nov. 18 *9/11*

Read: CSPI#s 34, 35, 36

1. What does the official 9/11 report conclude about policy or organizational failures in stopping the attacks?

2. Outline Griffin's main points regarding omissions and distortions in the official report. What do you think?
3. What does Abrahamian argue about the US media's "framing" of 9/11. What does he consider to be the implications of this framing? Do you agree with this interpretation of US media coverage?

Nov. 25, no class, professor at conference.

Dec. 2 ***Mobilizing for suicide missions, who, how and why?***

Read: CSPI#44-47

1. What is "the strategic logic of suicide terrorism" according to Pape?
2. What are some explanations of suicide terrorism?
3. What does the al-Qaeda video article tell you about recruitment methods?
4. Do you think it is possible to "profile" suicide bombers?
5. How do you react to the interview with the mother of a suicide bomber?

Dec. 9 ***The Warriors on Terror, who, why and what next?***

Read: CSPI#379,409,517,531

1. What is the PNAC agenda and world view?
2. To what degree does the war on terror threaten civil liberties in the countries waging this war?
3. Does "Iraq: Setting the Record Straight" make a convincing argument for the war in Iraq?
4. Respond to Robert Fisk's article- "Yet still civilians were being cut down.....Could all this be forgiven in the name of liberation?"
5. How is the war on terror comparable to any other war in modern history?
6. What is the future of the war on terror?

Winter Term

Jan. 6 NO CLASS

Jan 13 PAPER PROPOSAL DUE, Class Discussion of Proposals

Jan. 20, 27, Feb. 3, Feb. 10– NO CLASS, research and writing, consult with professor about papers.

Feb. 24 - DRAFT PAPERS DUE in class.

March 3, 10, 17 Paper presentations and discussion.

March 24, 31. Research and writing, consult with me about your papers.

April 7 FINAL PAPER DUE. Concluding discussion.