BSST 633
Research Methods in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism
Spring 2017
University of Maryland

Lecture: Wednesdays 6:00-8:30pm

Professor: Dr. Michael Jensen
Email: majensen@umd.edu
Office hours: Skype by appointment

Professor: Dr. Omi Hodwitz
Email: omi@umd.edu
Office hours: Skype by appointment

TA: Joseph Oudin, MA
Email: joudin@umd.edu
Office hours: Skype by appointment

Course Description and Objectives

This course covers research design, qualitative, and quantitative methods using a hands-on approach. The course considers general themes such as the logic of inquiry, the appropriateness of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodological approaches, as well as more specific topics such as process tracing, sampling, and measurement. It also provides students with the opportunity to learn and apply different tools for social science research, including qualitative methods such as case study design and quantitative methods such as descriptive statistics and multivariate inference.

The primary goals of the course are to: 1) formulate a proper research question in terrorism/counter-terrorism studies 2) present the qualitative and/or quantitative research designs to tackle the formulated question 3) introduce problems/issues one faces in terrorism research such as bias, causal complexity, and collinearity 4) familiarize the student with major terrorism databases and 5) cultivate a set of qualitative and quantitative skills to analyze terrorism data. By the end of the semester, students will have a better understanding of the research methods needed to answer important questions related to terrorism and counterterrorism.

This course is unique in that it is co-taught by two instructors. Dr. Jensen has expertise in qualitative research methods while Dr. Hodwitz has a background in quantitative analysis. This will give students the opportunity to learn from two instructors who each specialize in different methodologies, but share a common focus on the study of terrorism. This will provide students with the opportunity to see how different methods can be used to analyze separate aspects of the same research problem. The class is split into three modules, each with a different instructor assignment: the fundamentals of doing research (both instructors), quantitative analysis (Dr. Hodwitz), and qualitative analysis (Dr. Jensen).
Course Assessment

Final grades will be assigned according to the student’s performance on the following items:

1) Class participation based on readings/discussion questions 20%

2) Assignment 1 40%

3) Assignment 2 40%

1) Regular class attendance and active class participation (20% of the course grade): The expectation is that students will be prepared to constructively participate in class discussions. This requires completing the assigned readings before each class, attending class regularly, and being on time for class. The teaching assistant, Joe Oudin, will post discussion questions before each class and students should be prepared to discuss these questions during each lecture. If you are unable to attend a class due to health, work, or family considerations, you may post responses to the discussion questions on the course website before class begins to receive participation credit for the week. Please ensure that you have working headphones and a microphone (webcams are not required).

2) Assignments (80% of your course grade, 40% each): Each student will complete two assignments during the course. Students should post their assignments on ELMS. If you have questions about how to do this, please email Joe Oudin.

- **Assignment 1: (due April 5th).**

  Assignment 1 is a quantitative essay. Students are expected to carry out a complete study including: identify a research question, write a literature review, form hypotheses, select variables, locate a data source, analyze the data (including descriptive, bivariate, and multivariate analyses), provide visual aids, present results, and form a conclusion. The essay should be between 15-20 pages, excluding supplementary materials (visual aids, appendices, etc). Students are strongly encouraged to complete each of these steps as the relevant topics are covered in the lectures.

- **Assignment 2: (due May 17th).**

  Assignment 2 is a qualitative essay. Students are expected to draw on comparative case evidence to make policy recommendations about an emerging issue in counterterrorism. Students will identify a theory or theories that provide expectations that relate to the emerging issue that they have selected. Students will then use an appropriate case-based method (e.g., process-tracing, comparative method, etc.) to assess the logical consistency and explanatory power of the theory/theories that they identified, and they will draw logical conclusions about, and policy prescriptions for, the issue that they have selected. Students will need to explain why the method that they have chosen is appropriate given the issue that they are analyzing, and they will be expected to clearly articulate their case selection criteria and use appropriate case evidence to illustrate their points. This essay should be between 15-20 pages, double-spaced.
Expectations

This is a graduate course. Students are advised not to fall behind in the reading.

Powerpoint will be provided during lectures to guide note-taking and a recording of the lecture will be posted on Elms after the session has concluded. Students are expected to attend class regularly, arrive early and prepared, and conduct themselves with respect and courtesy toward others in the classroom.

Grading Scale

Grades will be assigned following the University of Maryland standard grading scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Qualitative Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>97-100</td>
<td>A+</td>
<td>Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-96</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-92</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87-89</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83-86</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-82</td>
<td>B-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77-79</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>Achievement that is in keeping with the course requirements in every respect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73-76</td>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-72</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67-69</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to meet fully the course requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-66</td>
<td>D</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-59</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Work that was either completed but not worthy of credit, or incomplete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Extensions and Incompletes

In the event that a serious problem emerges that you feel necessitates an extension or an incomplete, you must speak with us before the due date regarding this request. Extensions and incompletes are usually granted in the case of sickness, required official school events, familial bereavement, and religious holidays. Extensions and incompletes will not be granted if the request is made after the relevant deadline.

Plagiarism Policy

Academic dishonesty of any form will absolutely not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty encompasses the traditional behavior such as cheating on exams and assignments, giving false statements, etc., but also includes activities such as possessing and/or reviewing previous semester's assignments. The University of Maryland, College Park has a nationally Recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit http://www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/whatis.html.
**Required & Suggested Readings**

The reading materials are available on the ELMS course website. Additional readings may be posted throughout the semester.

**Books** (you will be reading specific chapters from these books but you are advised to read the whole book at some future time):


---

**MODULE 1: The Fundamentals of Doing Research**

**Jan 25**  
**Introduction to the Study of Research Methods (Hodwitz)**  
**Doing Research: Purpose, Process, Products, and Ethics**  

**Feb 1**  
**Introduction to Terrorism Research (Jensen)**  
Feb 8 Research Questions and Literature Reviews (Hodwitz)

Feb 15 The Building Blocks of Research (Jensen)
Conceptualization, Operationalization, Theory

MODULE 2: Quantitative Analysis of Terrorism Data (Hodwitz)

Feb 22 Working with Terrorism Data
- Download and explore the following databases in Excel:
  - START’s Global Terrorism Database (GTD)
  - CPOST’s Suicide Attack Database (SAD)
  - RAND’s Database of Worldwide Terrorism Incidents (WTI)
- The 2014 Washington Post/Monkey Cage debate (GTD vs SAD):
  - “Government data exaggerate the increase in terrorist attacks”
  - “The challenges of collecting terrorism data”
  - “How to fix the flaws in the Global Terrorism Database and why it

---

matters”

Mar 1  Descriptive Statistics

Mar 8  Bivariate Analysis
- Royce A. Singleton and Bruce C. Straits, *Approaches to Social Research, 4th ed* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), Chapter 14 *(read pages 467-482 only).*

Mar 15  Multivariate Analysis

Mar 22  SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

---

2 This portion of Chapter 14 overlaps considerably with the previous reading (Manheim et al Chapter 17) but presents the information in a different way. If you have a good grasp of the material after reading Manheim, you can skip this chapter. However, if you’re struggling with the Manheim content, read this chapter since it may facilitate understanding, given that it approaches the same material differently.
Mar 29  Critiquing Quantitative Methods and Quantitative Catch-Up


---

**MODULE 3: Qualitative Analysis of Terrorism Data (Jensen)**

Apr 5  Logic of Inference in Qualitative Methods

Assignment 1 due


Apr 12  Process Tracing


Apr 19  Comparative Method

- Jack S. Levy (2015) Counterfactuals, Causal Inference, and Historical

---

3 This is a “catch-up” lecture. We may use this lecture to discuss outstanding material from the previous lectures, to review progress on the first assignment, or to cover new material. As such, this is a tentative reading list. Students will be given more detail about the content of this lecture in the weeks leading up to it.
Analysis, Security Studies, 24:3, 378-402,

Apr 26  Causal Complexity in the Study of Terrorism.

May 3  Mixed Methods and Future Research

May 10  No Class.

May 17  Assignment 2 Due by 6pm