

# IDEOLOGY AND SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE MAKING OF TERRORISM IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Sociology 481, Section 0101  
Online  
Fall 2020  
Tuesday-Thursday 12:30 – 1:45PM

## **Instructor**

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## **Course Objectives**

This class discusses the relationship between ideology and social conditions in the making of terrorism in the historical context of the Middle East and North Africa. It navigates through major events of the twentieth century in order to explain the historical process that undermined the secular and moderate discourses that were popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and systematically promoted the rise of radical political ideologies. This class considers radical ideologies neither a result of abnormal psychological states of the terrorists nor a pathological consequence of dysfunctional social structures, even though they may be linked to such psychological and social-structural conditions. Rather, radical discourses like other ideologies are extremist resolutions of a set of sociopolitical and cultural issues that exist in all societies and are debated by different contenders for power. Radical discourses rest on a series of key concepts that shape the cognitive structure of political activists, directing them toward extremist assessment of their situations and engagement in violent political activities. To elucidate the relations of ideology to social conditions, this class (1) identifies and discusses these key concepts, (2) explains how these concepts were produced by the intellectual leaders-cum-ideologues of Muslim extremism, (3) discusses the connection between major historical events—a sudden economic downturn, violent demonstration, military coup, war, or revolution—that feed ideological extremism and contribute to the transmission and proliferation of violent ideas among the target audience. The last step addresses the role of historical conjuncture in articulating extremist discourses with social conditions.

In exploring the relationship between ideology and social conditions, this class attempts to answer one single question: How did the Middle East and North Africa fall into the maelstrom of religious fundamentalism, Islamic extremism, and sectarian violence in the past decades? To

rephrase the same question, how do we understand the nature of the historical process that transformed the moderate, liberal, and pro-Western discourse of Islamic modernism of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries into the discourse of Muslim extremism of the past decades? As this class steers through various historical events, shaping the succession of cultural episodes in the contemporary Middle East and North Africa, one key intellectual process, or rather counter intellectual process, may become evident and illuminated: literalism.

The class begins with a discussion of the manifestos of Islamic extremism. It then introduces and assesses the elements of the cognitive perspective and the theory of cognitive structure activation for a more effective understanding of terrorism. Next, it discusses the episodic-discourse model of ideological production. Four, the class makes a short detour into Marxism, and discusses how Marxist terrorists formulated their narrative in order to provide justifications for engaging in violence. Five, the class provides an overview of the contemporary history of the Middle East and North Africa as a succession of different cultural episodes in order to specify the conditions under which Islamic fundamentalism emerged. Six, it discusses the rise of Islamic extremism as an outcome of the interactions between religious fundamentalism and the secular authoritarian interventionist state. Seven, the class introduces the concepts of historical conjuncture and articulation in order to explain how Islamic extremism constitutes politics, is normalized, and feeds on political conflicts, wars, and revolutions in galvanizing and mobilizing its target audiences against the state and Western governments. The last section of the class addresses the crisis of political Islam and trend in values toward secular politics, religious tolerance, and national identity based on findings from comparative cross-national values surveys in the region. The class ends with students' presentations.

### **Assignments**

1. Reading materials: Students are expected to read all the assigned materials.
2. In-Class Discussions: There will be a total of four in-class discussions. Each of these discussions will focus on the topics presented in the previous weeks. Students are expected to fully participate in these discussions and prepare a report. These reports are not supposed to be mini papers. Rather, they are intended as students' organized reflections on the assigned readings, topics discussed, and issues debated.
3. Research Project: Each student is instructed to engage in researching one of the following terrorist groups in the Middle East and North Africa: Fada'iyān-e Islam in Iran, Lebanese Hezbollah, Islamic jihad in Egypt, al-Qaeda in Saudi Arabia, al-Shabab in Yemen, and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. The students then start their research project by discussing the when the terrorist group was formed, the social context of the country in which group emerged, the background of the people who founded it as well as its organizational structure, ideology, and engagement in political violence. Students should assess how this terror group (a) addressed its target audiences by articulating Islamic nationalistic and/or sectarian rhetoric, (b) employed key concepts to link its goals and activities to Islam, and (c) objectified its ideology into symbols.
4. Progress Report: In addition to making an in-class presentation at the end of the semester, each student is expected to provide a bi-weekly written progress report and one final written report.

### **Grading and Assignments**

Final grades are determined by the following:

- Research Project– 25%
- Mid-term and Final Exam – 40%
- Chapter Summaries – 15% (a total of three, 5% each)
- Report from In-class discussions– 15% of your grade
- In-class Participation – 5% of your grade

### Grading:

- For all assignments and the final grade, grading will be done on the basis of percentages, which will then be converted into symbols according to the following schema:  
 >96%=A+; 91%-96%=A; 89%-90%=A-; 87%-88%=B+; 81%-86%=B; 79%-80%=B-;  
 77%-78%=C+; 71%-76%=C; 69%-70%=C-; 68%-60%=D; <60%=F.

### Textbook

Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism: Episode and Discourse*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### How Did the Middle East Get Here?

*The Failure of Reason and Triumph of Literalism*

#### Week 1 September 1 & 3: The Manifestos of Terrorism

1. Shaykh Abdullah Azzam, *Join the Caravan*, [http://archive.org/stream/JoinTheCaravan/JoinTheCaravan\\_djvu.txt](http://archive.org/stream/JoinTheCaravan/JoinTheCaravan_djvu.txt).
2. Abu Bakr Naji, *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical State through Which the Umma Will Pass*, translated by William McCants, 2006, <http://thegorkabriefing.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/abu-bakr-naji-the-management-of-savagery-the-most-critical-stage-through-which-the-umma-will-pass.pdf>.
3. Umar ‘Abd al-Hakim Abu Mus’ab as-Suri, *The Call for a Global Islamic Resistance*, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/275734802/The-Call-For-A-Global-Islamic-Resistance-Abu-Musab-Al-Suri-English-100-pgs>.
4. Mansoor Moaddel, “How did the Middle Eat Get Here?”

#### Week 2 September 8 & 10: The Manifestos of Terrorism

In-class discussion<sub>1</sub> (Thursday, September 10)

### Cognition, Cognitive Structure Activation, Episodic Discourse, and the Narrative of Terror

#### Week 3 September 15 & 17: Ideology as Cognition

1. Constantine Sedikides and John J. Skowronski, “The Law of Cognitive Structure Activation,” *Psychological Inquiry*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1991), pp. 169-184. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/1449259.pdf>.

2. Rogers Brubaker, "Ethnicity, Race, and Nationalism," *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2009, 35: 21-42,  
<http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-soc-070308-115916>
3. Mansoor Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism, Nationalism, and Fundamentalism*, introduction.

**Week 4 September 22 & 24:** Secular Ideology and Extremism: Narrative and Terrorism in Marxism

1. "Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy,"  
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface-abs.htm>
2. From Marxian Theory of Revolution to Breakdown of the Second International and Lenin's *What Is to Be Done*
3. Secular Terrorist Ideology: Vulgar Marxism, the Vanguard of the Vanguard Party, and the *foco* tactics.
4. Woddis, Jack. 1972. "Chapter 3: Debray and the Revolution in Latin America" (pp. 179-278), *New Theories of Revolution*, New York: International Publishers.
5. Ahmad-Zadeh, Massoud. *Armed Struggle; both a Strategy and a Tactic*.
6. <http://www.siahkal.com/english/Massoud.htm>
7. Pouyan, Amir-Parviz. *The Necessity of Armed Struggle and the Refutation of the Theory of Survival*. <http://www.siahkal.com/english/Pouyan.htm>
8. Functions of Narrative in Terrorism: The Case of *Foco* Tactic in Terrorism of the Left

In-class discussion<sub>2</sub> (Thursday, September 24)

**Week 5 September 29 & October 1:** History as a Succession of Cultural Episodes in the Middle East and North Africa

1. Islamic modernism
2. Territorial nationalism and liberalism
3. Pan-Arab nationalism
4. Islamic fundamentalism
5. Islamic extremism and suicide terrorism

**Western Cultural Challenge, Discursive Space, and the Rise of Reason:**  
*Islamic Modernism in Egypt, India, and Iran*

**Week 6 October 6 & 8:** Liberal-Secular Age in the Middle East and North Africa

Required:

Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism*, Chapters 2-5.

Recommended:

1. Moaddel, Mansoor. 2001. "Conditions for Ideological Production: The Origins of Islamic Modernism in India, Egypt, and Iran," *Theory and Society* 30 (October): 669-731.
2. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 34-66.

**Supranationalist Ideologies and Attacks on Individual Liberty:**

*The Subordination of the Idea of Freedom to the Exigencies of Arab Liberation in the Discourse of Pan-Arab Nationalism*

**Due: Chapter summery 1 (October 12)**

**Week 7 October 13 & 15: Decline of liberalism: The Rise of Pan-Arab Nationalism**

1. Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism*, chapters 6-8.
  2. Dawn, C. Ernest. 1988. "The Formation of Pan-Arab Ideology in the Interwar Years." *International journal of Middle East Studies* 20:67-91.
  3. Hourani, *Arabic Thought*, pp. 260-323.
- Recommended:
4. Dawisha, Adeed. 2003. *Arab Nationalism in the Twentieth Century: From Triumph to Despair*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
  5. Dawn, C. Ernest. 1973. *From Ottomanism to Arabism: Essay on the Origins of Arab Nationalism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
  6. Cleveland, William L. 1971. *The Making of an Arab Nationalist: Ottomanism and Arabism in the Life and Thought of Sati' al-Husri*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

**Mid-Term Exam (take home)**

**Due: Chapter summery 2 (October 19)**

**The Triumph of Literalism and as a Response to Secularist Onslaught On Religion**

**Week 8 October 20 & 22: Decline of secularism: The Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism**

1. Moaddel, *Islamic Modernism*, chapters 9-10.
2. Mitchell, Richard P. 1969. *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*. London: Oxford University Press, chapters I through V.

Egypt as a Throwback to the Pre-Islamic Age of Ignorance (*Jahiliyya*)  
*The Radicalization of the Islamic Fundamentalism & the Rise of Extremism*

**Week 9 October 27 & 29: Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad abd al-Salam Faraj, Shukri Mustafa, Ayatollah Khomeini, and the Rise of Extremism**

1. Sivan, Emmanuel, 1985. *Radical Islam: Medieval Theology and Modern Politics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

2. Sayyid Qutb, *Milestones* (Indianapolis: American Trust Publications, 1993); and William E. Shepard, *Sayyid Qutb and Islamic Activism: A Translation and Critical Analysis of Social Justice in Islam* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), p. xvii.
3. Hasan Hanafi, 1982. "The Relevance of the Islamic Alternative in Egypt," *Arab Studies Quarterly* 4, nos. 1–2: 60–61.
4. Kepel, Gilles. 1985. *Muslim Extremism in Egypt: The Prophet and Pharaoh*, trans. Jon Rothschild. Berkeley: University of California Press.
5. Khomeini, Ruhollah, 1981. *Islam and Revolution: Writings and Declarations of Imam Khomeini*. Translated and annotated by Hamid Algar. Berkeley: Mizan Press.
6. Zonis, Marvin. 1985. "The Rule of the Clerics in the Islamic Republic of Iran." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 482, Changing Patterns of Power in the Middle East (Nov.): 85-108

In-class discussion<sub>3</sub> (Thursday, October 29)

### **Historical Conjuncture and the Articulation of Islamic Extremism with Social Conditions** *Proliferation of Extremist Ideas*

**Week 10 November 3 & 5:** Four Major Historical Events 1978-79: Pro-Islamic Military Coup in Pakistan, the Iranian Revolution, the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan, the Occupation

**Week 11 November 10 & 12:** Al-Qaeda

1. Orbach, Benjamin. 2001. "Usama Bin Ladin And Al-Qa'ida: Origins And Doctrines." *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 5, 4 (December): 54-68.
2. Sozek, Jonathan, 2006. "Osama bin Laden's global Islamism and Wahhabi Islam." *McGill Journal of Middle East Studies*, VIII, 33-54.
3. Blanchard, Christopher M. 2008. "The Islamic Traditions of Wahhabism and Salafiyya." *CRS Report for Congress*.
4. `Azzam, Shaykh `Abdullah, *Join the Caravan*.
5. "Declaration of Jihad Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Mosques." *Al Islah* (London), Sept. 2, 1996.

**Due: Chapter summary 3 (November 16)**

### **The Rise of Shia Power and Shia-Sunni Sectarian Extremism** *A Glimmer of Hope: Trend in Values*

**Week 12 November 17 & 19:** American Invasion and Occupation of Iraq and the Rise of Sunni-Shia Sectarianism

Understanding ISIS

1. Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan, *ISIS: Inside the Army of Terror*. New York: Regan Arts, 2015.
2. William McCants. *The ISIS Apocalypse: The History, Strategy, and Doomsday Vision of the Islamic State*, New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2015.

### **The Crisis of Political Islam**

**Week 13 November 24:** Trend in Values—The Rise Secular Politics, Religious Tolerance, and National Identity

**Week 14 December 1 & 3:** In-class discussion<sup>4</sup> (Tuesday, December 1) and Student presentation

**Week 15 December 8 & 10:** Student presentation

**Final Exam: As scheduled.**