BSOS 388O: The Geography of Terrorism and Conflict
Fall 2010
Wednesdays, 10:00am – 1:00pm
LeFrak Hall 0231 (Computer Labs)

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Office Hours: Wednesday 2:00pm-4:00pm
Or by appointment

Course Summary
Why do some areas of the world tend to have more violent conflict? Do terrorists consider geographic features of a possible target when selecting a location for their attack? How do historical geographies of culture and language heighten the risk of terrorism in one area, but not another? How can understanding the geographic perspective of a terrorist group affect the ability to effectively carry out counterterrorism? “The Geography of Terrorism and Conflict” is designed for students interested in working for the intelligence community or pursuing graduate work in political science, criminology, or policy analysis. Students taking this course will participate in a unique learning environment which will both examine the current theories regarding the intersection of geography and conflict, as well as require students to be involved with a major, multi-year, multi-researcher social science project on terrorism: the Global Terrorism Database. Through a combination of lectures, lab sessions, and research coding, students will combine principles of geography to address relevant intelligence challenges.

What is the Global Terrorism Database?
The Global Terrorism Database (GTD) is an open-source database including information on terrorist events around the world from 1970 through 2008 (with additional annual updates planned for the future). Unlike many other event databases, the GTD includes systematic data on domestic as well as transnational and international terrorist incidents that have occurred during this time period and now includes more than 87,000 cases. For each GTD incident, information is available on the date and location of the incident, the weapons used and nature of the target, the number of casualties, and--when identifiable--the group or individual responsible.

Course Mechanics
The course is arranged to reflect its hybrid nature. For the first hour of class, Wednesday sessions will be dedicated to discussing articles on specific theories of or topics on the geography of conflict and terrorism, which I will situate in relation into the perspectives of conflict from criminology, political science, sociology, and economics. A separate two hour lab session will be held following in the LeFrak Computer Labs, where students will receive training, work on their geocoding, and able to ask questions or receive assistance from the instructor.

The course website (available through www.elms.umd.edu) will be an important means of communication. All readings will be posted via the course website. Reflection paper assignments will be posted on the website, and students will submit them online as well. The website will also contain a variety of materials to help you be a successful researcher for the GTD. It is essential that students check the website on a regular basis.
Course Expectations

As an upper-level seminar, this course will be demanding in terms of the difficulty of materials and the amount of time and focus required. Most of the required geocoding research must be completed outside of regular course times, although each week there is a two-hour lab session in the LeFrak Computer Labs in addition to the one hour class session. Therefore, students must manage their time well in order to be successful in the class. Students who have difficulty in time management are encouraged to meet with me in order to devise strategies for success. Geocoding research requires a commitment from all students taking this class. The GTD is used by a wide variety of constituents, ranging from students to researchers to federal agencies to international intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations and World Bank. Your work on this project – in addition to counting for a large portion of your grade – also has real-world effects.

Regular attendance is also imperative. I understand that circumstances sometimes necessitate absences. Students missing class due to illness or personal/family emergencies will be excused provided the absence is documented. Students missing class for religious observance will also be excused, provided that they notify me in advance of the absence. Students who miss class will be responsible for getting notes from classmates.

The topics of terrorism and conflict can sometimes be difficult to discuss. There may be students in the class who have experienced such conflict personally. Others may have very strong feelings and opinions regarding certain conflicts. In order to create an environment conducive to learning, we need to respect each other. Students are expected to pay attention to the instructor and to each other during discussion. I will not tolerate rude behavior. Students who indulge in such behavior will be warned once and then asked to leave.

The University has approved a Code of Academic Integrity, available online at http://www.president.umd.edu/policies/docs/III-100A.pdf. The code prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two classes without authorization, buying papers, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Suspected violations of academic integrity guidelines will be reported to the Student Honor Council, the body in charge of enforcement.

The University has an obligation to accommodate students with disabilities. Students with disabilities should inform me at the beginning of the term about their needs. Appropriate accommodations will be made in consultation with Disability Support Services.

Course Requirements
Assignments for the class fall into two categories – academic assignments and project assignments. The final presentation will serve to bridge the two aspects of the course. Grades will be assigned as follows:

Participation: 10%
Reflection papers: 20%
Geographic Research on Terrorist Incidents: 45%
Final presentation: 25%
Participation
Earning a good participation grade will require much more than just showing up to class. It includes active and thoughtful participation in discussions in class. Your ability to participate in an informed way is dependent on a thorough reading of the course material.

Reflection papers
During the course of the class, you will be required to complete two short reflection papers on the geographic of terrorism and conflict. One will be due on the date that the student is assigned for class discussion. The second will cover the intersection of geography and conflict in the country or terrorist group you are assigned. Reflection papers are due by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before the discussion on Wednesday. Reflection paper assignments will be posted and submitted via the course website. Successful reflection papers will do more than summarize the relevant readings. Rather, they will relate them to other readings or to the research with START and approach them critically. No late reflection papers will be accepted.

Geocoding training module
The geocoding training module will be split into three mini-sessions, which will be dispersed throughout the semester as the geographic research progresses. It consists of a series of exercises to familiarize students with the coding process as well as a test case, for which students will code a series of events for both geographic accuracy and clarity.

Geographic Research on Terrorism Incidents
Each student will complete the geocoding for a series of terrorist events drawn from the GTD. The events could be all the terrorist incidents within (a) specific countr(ies), or they could be a sample of events drawn from a specific terrorist group or type of terrorist attack (hijackings, bombings, etc.). Students will be given a list during the first week of class of available countries, groups, and or types of terrorist attacks and be able to submit preferences for those they would like to research. The coding will be broken up into three phases, with each phase worth 15% of a student’s overall final grade. The assignments will be graded for geographic accuracy and clarity. Research assignments turned in late will receive a 10% deduction in the grade for each day of lateness.

Given the number of terrorist events committed within certain countries or by certain groups, it may possible that more than one student will be working on the same country / group (albeit, different incidents). In these cases, while each student will be responsible for and graded on their own set of cases, group collaboration will be permitted to completing the geographic research, as well as the final presentation (see below).

Final presentation
The final presentation will be an opportunity for students to apply the knowledge gained through the assigned readings to analyzing trends and patterns in terrorist events. Similar to briefings in intelligence agencies, students will be required to summarize a large breadth of information into a concise presentation that will communicate the most important details of the geographic pattern of terrorism for their selected dataset. Each presentation will be in a condensed format, with 10 minutes available per presentation followed by 2 questions from the instructor and 2 questions from the other students. Students will also be required to provide a 5-page executive summary detailing the analytical trends of terrorism in their selected dataset, as well as the important “take home” points that such an analysis
requires the viewer to consider. Students will evaluate each presenter, and those evaluations will form a portion of the final presentation grade.

It is permitted for students to collaborate / work together for the final presentation if they share the same group or country. Students wishing to do this are required to secure permission of the instructor at least one week prior to the final presentation, and each student will be required to speak during the final presentation. An individual executive summary will be required from each student, however.

**Course Schedule**

Notes: Reflection paper due dates are not noted. For the topics you choose, reflection papers are due by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday before we discuss the topic on Wednesday. Many assignments are due on days other than Wednesdays. This allows me to have feedback ready for you when you come to class. It does require that you be diligent and responsible in keeping track of when assignments are due.

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Assignments</th>
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| 9/1  | Course Overview  
Training Set 1 | None | In-Class Assessment |
| 9/8  | Training Session | Read Coding Manual (sent to students by Tuesday, 9/7) | 1st set of Cases Assigned |
- Kaplan (2009) *The Revenge of Geography* | |
| 9/22 | - Klare (2001) *The New Geography of Conflict*
- Hausmann (2001) *Prisoners of Geography* | |
| 9/29 | Geography of Civil War: Importance, Measurement, and Issues | Where does conflict occur?  
- Bauhuag and Gates (2002) *The Geography of Civil War* | 1st set of cases due 5:00pm on 10/5 |
| 10/6 | Symposium on Technology, Crime, and Terrorism | | |
2nd set of Cases Assigned |
| 10/27 | Geography and Terrorism | Why geography matters for terrorism  
- Midlarsky et al. (1980) *Why Violence Spreads*
- Flint (2003) *Geography and Terrorism* | 3rd Training Session  
3rd set of cases assigned  
2nd set of cases due 5:00pm on 11/19 |
| 11/3 | - Rossmo and Harries (2009) *Geospatial Structure of Terrorist Cells* | |
| 11/10 | Geography of Iraqi Insurgency | - Siebeneck et al (2009) *Spatial Analysis of Terrorist Incidents in Iraq*
- Townsley et al (2008) *Space-Time Dynamics of Iraqi Insurgent Activity* | |
| 11/17 | Supervised Lab Session | | |
| 11/24 | No Class (Instructor at Conference) | | |
*GUEST LECTURE* | 3rd set of cases due 5:00pm on 12/7  
2nd Reflection Paper due 5:00pm on 12/3 |
| 12/8 | Final Presentations | No reading; prepare for presentations | Final set of all cases, cleaned, coded, and accurate, due by Thursday, December 16th |
| TBD  | Introduction to ArcGIS | | |

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