

# Comm 349/549: Terrorism and Communication

University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point  
Winterim 2019

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## Instructor: Dr. Cade Spaulding

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*On all scheduled days of class (including Saturday, Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>), I check and respond to student emails in the morning (sometime after 7am), mid-day (high noon), and evening (sometime between 5pm-9pm).*

*I'll check and respond to email at least daily on Jan. 13<sup>th</sup> (Sat.), & 20<sup>th</sup> (Sat.) but I won't be available on Sundays. Please plan accordingly for assignment and other course communications.*

Office Hours: M-F (10am-11am and 2pm-3pm) and by appointment (*please email to schedule*)

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## Course Overview

This course will introduce students to the phenomena of communication in contemporary terrorism and extremism. Emphasis will be placed on symbolic communication of extremism as a foundation for terrorist behavior, types of terrorism, and how governments and law enforcement agencies respond to terrorism.

## Learning Goals and Outcomes

The primary goal of this course is to uncover how communication mediates, facilitates, and shapes terrorist and counter-terrorist efforts. As part of this course, you will gain a knowledge of the motives, origins, and rationales for extremist beliefs and terrorist behavior, as well as how governments respond. You will be challenged to critically assess extremist ideological and symbolic nature of terrorist language, images, and practices. After participating in this course, you will be able to:

- Identify the challenges facing American public administrative agencies (particularly law enforcement and national security agencies) as they deal with the problems of hate crimes and terrorism.
- Explain the origins of extremist belief, how we define “terrorism”, and the symbolic nature of terrorism.
- Clearly differentiate terrorism from above (state terrorism) and terrorism from below (dissident terrorism).
- Demonstrate familiarity with the different types of terrorism.
- Apply a communication-centered framework for understanding extremist beliefs and terrorist behaviors.

## Required Course Materials

### Primary Textbooks

Martin, G. (2018). *Understanding terrorism: Characteristics, perspectives, and issues* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications. (paper copy via UWSP text rental)

Matusitz, J. (2015). *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield. (Accessible Online @ UWSP Library using this link:

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uwsp/reader.action?ppg=1&docID=1790863&tm=1546418024275>)

### Course Canvas Website

Assigned multi-media and supplementary text listed in Course Calendar available on the course Canvas website.

## Course Policies

**Active Participation:** Students are expected to fully engage in this course. Participation in class discussions are mandatory and failure to participate could result in significant grade penalties.

**Assignment Submissions:** All assignments must be submitted as either .docx or .pdf files. All citations must be typed, follow APA style guidelines, and be in finished condition with few mechanical errors (grammar, format, spelling, etc.)

**Make-up and Late-work:** I handle this on a case-by-case based on past student performance/participation, the nature of the situation (unexpected and severe emergency outside the students control), and my own ability to accommodate the request within the course calendar.

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Policy Statement

*The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities.*

## Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

Absolutely no cheating will be permitted in this course. Plagiarism is a type of cheating and will not be permitted. I expect all students to do their own work in this course unless I explicitly direct otherwise and to uphold principles of honesty, integrity, and hard work. Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Please speak with me personally and/or refer to the UWSP Code of Ethics if you have any questions about the ethics of your conduct in this class. Note: All *university* rules and procedures regarding academic misconduct apply to this class.

## Course Assignments & Grading

The final grade for students will be calculated from the following formula:

Course Assignments	% of Final Grade
Online Class Discussions	40%
Terrorist Application Paper	60%

Grade Scheme: Letter grades are calculated using the following grade scheme:

A		B		C		D		F	
A	= 100 – 94	B+	= < 90 – 87	C+	= < 80 – 77	D+	= < 70 – 67	F	= < 64 - 0
A-	= < 94 - 90	B	= < 87- 84	C	= < 77 – 74	D	= < 67 - 64		
		B-	= < 84 – 80	C-	= < 74 – 70				

## Online Class Discussions

Each week there will be online class discussions to connect with other students in the class, ask questions, and share what you're learning about course topics. The format class discussions will vary between:

- Response questions on assigned textbook chapters,
- Critical analysis and application of recent course concepts/theories to actual terrorist case studies (text or video),
- Taking sides on related national/international issues and explaining your reasoning using course concepts/theories.

## Terrorist Application Paper

Terrorist Application Paper: The final paper (Undergraduate @ 8-10 pages; Graduate @ 15-20 pages) has 2 parts:

PART 1: Case-Study of a Terrorist Event
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For Part 1 of this paper you will research and write (30% - 40% of total paper) about a terrorist attack (*or several closely connected attacks by the same group*). Examples of possible terrorist attacks to research include (these are just a few suggestions - you may come up with other ideas):

- *ISIS (Paris, San Bernadino, etc.)*
- *911 Attack on World Trade Centers*
- *2008 Attack on Mumbai*
- *2004 Bombing of Commuter Trains in Madrid*
- *2013 Boston Marathon Bombing*
- *2012 Boko Haram bombings in Kano, Nigeria*
- *Eco-Terrorism (e.g., Earth Liberation Front) & Extreme Animal Rights Activists*
- *"Army of God" anti-abortion violence*
- *Terrorist actions of the Aryan Nations*
- *2007 Glasgow International Airport Attack*
- *Unabomber Attacks*
- *Oklahoma City Bombing*
- *Centennial Olympic Park Bombing*
- *Wisconsin Sikh Temple Shooting*
- *etc.*

**NOTE:** PART 1 MUST INCLUDE a minimum of 5 credible outside sources directly related to the terrorist organization/event you have chosen (CANNOT use textbooks as a "source" although a textbook can be helpful in finding original sources). "A" and even "B" papers will have more than 5 highly credible outside sources.

1. I have included a list of terrorist organizations on Canvas and several helpful links to additional resources to get you started in your research.
2. Choose a terrorist group early on and start researching. Ask UWSP librarians for help locating information on the group you choose!
3. Contact me if you have questions or need help.

## PART 2: Communication Analysis

In Part 2 of the paper (60% - 70% of total paper) you will analyze the terrorist organization/event(s) in Part 1 using the communication principles you have learned in this course. Papers must apply at least 2 unique theories or concept(s) of communication related to:

- *Symbolism*
- *Ideology,*
- *Use of mass media/social media,*
- *Social construction of terrorism,*
- *Group dynamics (recruitment, social identity, etc.),*
- *Organizational structure, leadership, etc.,*
- *Hostage taking/negotiation tactics,*
- *Networks and technology,*
- *Globalization and cultural/national differences in counter-terrorism efforts,*
- *Crisis communication,*
- *etc.*

**NOTE:** PART 2 MUST INCLUDE a minimum of 3 credible outside sources directly related to the communication theory/concept(s) you've researched. In this portion of the paper, be sure to:

1. Support your explanations with clear evidence and reasoning. Identify and define all concepts and theories you use. Show me you know what you are talking about.
2. Follow APA style guidelines (Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1" margins, page #'s, in-text citations, References page, etc.)
3. Utilize the campus writing lab to double check grammar, spelling, citation, etc.

# Comm 349/549: Terrorism and Communication

## Semester Course Calendar

**NOTE:** I reserve the right to make changes to this course calendar with student notification.

### Part 1: Communication Foundations of Terrorism

#### Day 1 (01/02): Terrorism as Symbolic Communication

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 1, 2 Matusitz Ch. 1, 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review Course Syllabus</li> <li>▪ (optional) Matusitz - <i>Introduction</i></li> <li>▪ (optional) U.S. House Homeland Security Committee: <i>Nov. 2018 Terror Threat Snapshot</i></li> </ul>	

#### Day 2 (01/03): Causes of Terrorism

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 3		

#### Day 3 (01/04): Media and Terrorism Interdependence

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 11 Matusitz Ch. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ (video) <i>Jihad 2.0: ISIS, Terrorism, and Social Media</i></li> </ul>	Online Class Discussion Post: <i>Communication Foundations of Terrorism</i>

### Part 2: Terrorist Structure, Identity, and Purpose

#### Day 4 (01/05): Culture, Identity, and Branding

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Matusitz Ch. 4, 5		

#### Day 5 (01/07): Culture, Identity, and Branding, Continued

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Matusitz Ch. 13, 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Winter (2018) - <i>Apocalypse, later: a longitudinal study of the Islamic State brand</i></li> </ul>	Online Class Discussion Post: <i>Culture, Identity, and Branding</i>

#### Day 6 (01/08): Religious & Ideological Terrorism

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 6 Matusitz Ch. 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Richards (2017) - <i>"Good and Evil" narratives...</i></li> </ul>	

Day 7 (01/09): *Religious & Ideological Terrorism, Continued*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Matusitz Ch. 8, 9		

Day 8 (01/10): *Religious & Ideological Terrorism, Continued*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 7 Matusitz Ch. 14		Online Class Discussion Post: <i>Religious &amp; Ideological Terrorism</i>

Day 9 (01/11): *Gender-Selective & Criminal Dissident Terrorism*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 9 Matusitz Ch. 12	▪ (optional) Matusitz (2017) <i>Gender Communal Terrorism or War Rape: Ten Symbolic Reasons</i>	Terrorist Application Paper Topic

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*Part 3: Terrorist Tactics, Targets, & Counterterrorism*

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Day 10 (01/14): *Tactics and Targets of Terrorism*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 10	▪ Brown, J. (2018) <i>Force of Words: The Role of Threats in Terrorism</i>	

Day 11 (01/15): *Tactics and Targets of Terrorism, Continued*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Matusitz Ch. 10, 11		Online Class Discussion Post: <i>Tactics and Targets</i>

Day 12 (01/16): *Counterterrorism & Homeland Security*

Textbooks	Canvas	Due Today
Martin Ch. 13, 14		

Day 13 (01/17): *Application Paper Workday*

Day 14 (01/18): *Application Paper Workday*

Day 15 (01/21): Terrorist Application Paper Due by 5pm