

**Ideology, Extremism and Violence**  
**JLC-485/685--03**  
**Fall 2021**

**Instructor:** Dr. Thomas Zeitzoff, Associate Professor.

**Schedule:** Wednesdays 2:30-5:20 PM, Kerwin 101

**Office hours:** Tuesday 2:30-4:00 PM, or by appointment (via Skype, “zeitzoff”)

**Email:** zeitzoff@american.edu

\*\*\*\*\***COVID MEASURES**\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\***TO GET US ALL THROUGH THE SEMESTER SAFELY**\*\*\*\*\*

1. Wear a mask at all times in class. Even better double mask or wear N-95, K-94, etc.
2. No eating or drinking in class. There will be at least two 10-minute breaks during class. If you need to drink or to eat during class, please step out and do so.
3. If you are sick, have been exposed, or are quarantining--don't come to class--stay home!
4. Be respectful of the personal space of your classmates and the professor.

The University provided clear expectations about the wearing of masks. Students not wearing a mask will be given a warning. If you do not comply, you will be asked to leave the classroom immediately. Students who have additional issues with the mask expectation after a first warning will be referred to Student Conduct for failure to comply with a directive of University officials.

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**Course Description**

This course asks how ideological narratives influence support for violence and explores related questions including how political ideologies help people make sense of the world; why certain ideologies or narratives are more attractive at certain times and to certain people; how groups and social movements use ideological narratives to recruit followers; and how ideologies and narratives prime people to support or commit political violence. Drawing on insights from political science, psychology, economics, and sociology students explore these questions and apply them to contemporary and historical groups and social movements that advocate and use political violence.

**Objectives (things you will know after taking this class)**

1. Understand what ideology and extremism are.
2. Be familiar with prominent theories of ideology, extremism, and radicalization
3. Have a factual understanding of a number of important instances of political violence.
4. Analyze a particular instance of political violence applying theories from psychology to better understand it.

**NOTE:** Some of the materials used in this course are graphic or disturbing in nature. We do not discuss these things lightly, nor are they presented purely for shock value. Rather, we observe the words of Eli Wiesel that are carved into the entrance the US Holocaust Museum, “for the dead and the living, we must bear witness.” Thus, we must both bear witness and try to understand the violence, in order prevent it in the future.

## **Readings**

There are no required books for this course. All of the readings and materials are available on the course website, or at a given url where indicated. You are required to do all the readings—both theoretical and for the presentation background—for each class.

## **Sharing of Course Content**

Students are not permitted to make visual or audio recordings, including live streaming, of classroom lectures or any class related content, using any type of recording devices (e.g., smart phone, computer, digital recorder, etc.) unless prior permission from the instructor is obtained, and there are no objections from any of the students in the class. If permission is granted, personal use and sharing of recordings and any electronic copies of course materials (e.g., PowerPoints, formulas, lecture notes and any classroom discussions online or otherwise) is limited to the personal use of students registered in the course and for educational purposes only, even after the end of the course.

Exceptions will be made for students who present a signed Letter of Accommodation from the Academic Support and Access Center. See: How Do I Request Accommodations?

< <http://www.american.edu/ocl/asac/Accommodations.cfm> >

To supplement the classroom experience, lectures may be audio or video recorded by faculty and made available to students registered for this class. Faculty may record classroom lectures or discussions for pedagogical use, future student reference, or to meet the accommodation needs of students with a documented disability. These recordings are limited to personal use and may not be distributed (fileshare), sold, or posted on social media outlets without the written permission of faculty.

Unauthorized downloading, file sharing, distribution of any part of a recorded lecture or course materials, or using information for purposes other than the student’s own learning may be deemed a violation of *American University’s Student Conduct Code* and subject to disciplinary action (see Student Conduct Code VI. Prohibited Conduct).

## **Academic Integrity**

I take issues of cheating and plagiarism very seriously. Please familiarize yourself with the AU Academic Integrity Code. I regard violations of this code seriously and will immediately refer the matter to the dean. If you have any questions about the course, or more general requirements about the code, please do not hesitate to talk to me.

## Assessment

### **Participation (10%)**

Success in the course depends on regular attendance and discussion. Students must do ALL of the assigned readings before class and be prepared to answer questions and ask them. Attendance alone is insufficient to succeed. Discussion will be evaluated on both quality and quantity of comments, particularly during the presentations. You should also be prepared for the fact that I may call on you randomly--so come prepared.

### **Weekly Response to the Readings (15%)**

You will engage weekly on the Canvas discussion board. This will be in response to a prompt the professor posts related to that week's reading and topics. You need to have your post on the Canvas by Tuesday at 10:00 PM before class. Good discussion board comments

- a. Are related to the key questions for the week
- b. Uses the readings to make their points
- c. Engages and does not ignore previous students' or the professor's points
- d. Use appropriate and clear language.
- e. The quality of comments is more important than their quantity.

### **Violent Event Presentation (10%)**

In order to broaden our knowledge about different instances of political violence and connect our theoretical readings to concrete cases, each week we will have one violent event briefings per class (~30-45 minutes each). These will be student-led. You will sign up to present once for the semester (most likely with a partner). For the first 15 minutes of your brief you will put the violent event in context and will cover the actors (perpetrators, victims, external actors), motivation, kind of violence, and results of the violent event. The most important part will be how ideology explains the recruitment, motivation for the violence, tactics, used, and results. For the last 20 minutes of your brief, you will lead the class in a discussion linking the theoretical readings to the topic at hand. If you are using slides for your presentation, you need to email them to Prof Z by Tuesday before your briefing at 10:00pm Finally, as part of the presentation, you will email a brief summary (date, location, event description, and implications) of the event that will be used by the whole class for your oral exam (due Tuesday before your briefing by 10:00pm). The events from the violence presentations will be on the midterm exam.

### **Midterm (30%)**

An oral exam midterm will be held via Skype on **October 6<sup>th</sup>**.

### **Political Violence Event Project (35% total)**

You will select an event (not discussed in class) of political violence. You will then provide a concise policy brief that provides the background for the event and actors, and show ideology can and cannot help explain the event. As part of this project you will:

- Complete a one-page rough draft that outlines the general event **due November 3rd (5%)**
- Have a one-on-one meeting scheduled with the professor **November 10<sup>th</sup>**
- A 4-page final paper due **December 1st, the last day of class (15%)**
- An Oral Exam, that will be scheduled for the week of **December 8<sup>th</sup> (15%)**

More detailed rubric and expectations of the assignment will be discussed when the project is assigned.

### Classroom Courtesy

Classroom courtesy is an essential component of creating an effective learning environment. All students have the right to learn without unnecessary distractions. These distractions include: cellphones, talking during lectures (unless recognized by the instructor), reading newspapers, falling asleep, etc. If you need a cell phone for emergency purposes, leave it on vibrate.

Most importantly, class discussions of the issues in political science, criminology, and justice, can lead to strong feelings and heated debate. Because this is a college classroom, all discussion must be respectful and scholarly.

### *Scholarly Comments*

- Are respectful of diverse opinions and open to follow up questions and/or disagreement
- Are related to class and/or the course material
- Focus on advancing the discussion about issues related to the course and/or course material rather than personal beliefs, and
- Are delivered in normal tones and a non-aggressive manner.

### *Unacceptable Comments*

- Are personal in nature. This includes attacks on a person's appearance, demeanor, or political beliefs.
- Include interrupting the professor or other students. Raise your hand and wait to be recognized.
- Often use the discussion to argue for political positions and/or beliefs. If political discussions arise, they must be discussed in a scholarly way (see above).
- May include using raised tones, yelling, engaging in arguments with other students and being threatening in any manner.
- Include ignoring the professor's authority to maintain the integrity of the classroom environment.

## **Syllabus Change Policy**

This syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advanced notice. These changes may come via e-mail. Make sure to check your university-supplied email regularly. You are accountable for all such communications.

## **Students Resources**

If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please do not hesitate to consult with me. In addition to the resources of the department, a wide range of services is available to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements.

***Academic Support Center*** (x3360, MGC 243) offers study skills workshops, individual instruction, tutor referrals, and services for students with learning disabilities. Writing support is available in the ASC Writing Lab or in the Writing Center, Battelle 228.

***Disability Support Services*** (x3315, MGC 206) offers technical and practical support and assistance with accommodations for students with physical or psychological disabilities. If you have a disability and might require accommodations in this course, please notify me with a letter from DSS or ASC early in the semester so that we can make arrangements to address your needs.

***Counseling Center*** (x3500, MGC 214) offers counseling and consultations regarding personal concerns, self-help information, and connections to off-campus mental health resources.

***Writing Center*** in 228 Battelle-Tompkins offers free, individual coaching sessions to all AU students. In your 45-minute session, a student writing consultant can help you address assignments, understand the conventions of academic writing, and learn how to revise and edit your own work. The Center offers appointments on the hour from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, and 3 to 6 p.m. on Sundays. Call [202- 885- 2991](tel:202-885-2991) to arrange a session.

***Center for Diversity & Inclusion*** is dedicated to enhancing LGBTQ, Multicultural, First Generation, and Women's experiences on campus and to advance AU's commitment to respecting & valuing diversity by serving as a resource and liaison to students, staff, and faculty on issues of equity through education, outreach, and advocacy. It is located on the 2nd floor of Mary Graydon Center: [202-885-3651](tel:202-885-3651), email is [cdi@american.edu](mailto:cdi@american.edu).

***Dean of Students Office*** (x3300, 408 Butler Pavilion) offers one-on-one meetings to discuss academic, adjustment, and personal issues that may be interfering with a student's ability to succeed academically. The DOS office also verifies documentation for students who have medical or mental health issues that cause them to be absent from class.

## **Emergency Preparedness**

In the event of a declared pandemic (influenza or other communicable disease), American University will implement a plan for meeting the needs of all members of the university community. Should the university be required to close for a period of time, we are committed to ensuring that all aspects of our educational programs will be delivered to our students. These may include altering and extending the duration of the traditional term schedule to complete essential instruction in the traditional format and/or use of distance instructional methods. Specific strategies will vary from class to class, depending on the format of the course and the timing of the emergency. Faculty will communicate class-specific information to students via AU e-mail and Canvas, while students must inform their faculty immediately of any absence due to illness. Students are responsible for checking their AU e-mail regularly and keeping themselves informed of emergencies. In the event of a declared pandemic or other emergency, students should refer to the AU Web site ([american.edu/emergency](http://american.edu/emergency)) and the AU information line at (202) 885-1100 for general university-wide information, as well as contact their faculty and/or respective dean's office for course and school/college-specific information.

## **Week 1 (September 1) Defining Ideology, Extremism, and Violence?**

\*Assign Presentations\*

### Theory

- Zeitzoff, Thomas. "What is political violence?" (2021).
- Karell, Daniel, and Michael Freedman. "Rhetorics of radicalism." *American Sociological Review* 84.4 (2019): 726-753.
- McCauley, Clark, and Sophia Moskalenko. "Understanding political radicalization: The two-pyramids model." *American Psychologist* 72.3 (2017): 205.
- Kteily, Nour S., and Emile Bruneau. "Darker demons of our nature: The need to (re) focus attention on blatant forms of dehumanization." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 26.6 (2017): 487-494.
- Jost, John T. "Ideological asymmetries and the essence of political psychology." *Political psychology* 38.2 (2017): 167-208.

### Presentation

#### Anti-COVID lockdown movement

- Meade, Rachel. "The movement against coronavirus lockdowns is still going — and still angry." (2020): *Washington Post*.
- Mogelson, Luke, "The Militias Against Masks." (2020): *The New Yorker*.
- Iacoella, Francesco, Patricia Justino, and Bruno Martorano. *Do pandemics lead to rebellion? Policy responses to COVID-19, inequality, and protests in the USA*.

## **Week 2 (September 8) Social Stressors and Violent Extremism**

### Theory

- Blattman, Christopher, and Edward Miguel. "Civil war." *Journal of Economic literature* 48.1 (2010): 3-57.
- Margalit, Yotam. "Political responses to economic shocks." *Annual Review of Political Science* 22 (2019): 277-295.
- Agnew, Robert. "A general strain theory of terrorism." *Theoretical Criminology* 14.2 (2010): 131-153.
- O'Hagan, Sean. "Everyone to the Barricades." (2008): *The Guardian*.

### Presentations

#### Street Battles in the Weimar Republic: Communists (KPD) vs. Nazis (NSDAP)

- De Bromhead, Alan, Barry Eichengreen, and Kevin H. O'Rourke. "Political extremism in the 1920s and 1930s: Do German lessons generalize?." *The Journal of Economic History* 73.2 (2013): 371-406.
- Klußmann, Uwe. "The Ruthless Rise of the Nazis in Berlin." (2012): *Der Spiegel*
- Brown, Timothy Scott. "The SA in the radical imagination of the long Weimar Republic." *Central European History* 46.2 (2013): 238-274.

### **Week 3 (September 15) Groups, Movements, and Extremism**

**\*\*Schedule Midterm Oral Exams\*\***

#### Theory

- Kalmoe, Nathan P., and Lilliana Mason. "Lethal mass partisanship: Prevalence, correlates, and electoral contingencies." *National Capital Area Political Science Association American Politics Meeting*. 2019.
- Berman, Eli, and David D. Laitin. "Religion, terrorism and public goods: Testing the club model." *Journal of public Economics* 92.10-11 (2008): 1942-1967.
- Fischer, Agneta, Eran Halperin, Daphna Canetti, and Alba Jasini. "Why we hate." *Emotion Review* 10, no. 4 (2018): 309-320.
- Bainbridge, William Sims, and Rodney Stark. "Cult formation: Three compatible models." *Sociological Analysis* 40.4 (1979): 283-295.
- Martherus, James L., Andres G. Martinez, Paul K. Piff, and Alexander G. Theodoridis. "Party animals? Extreme partisan polarization and dehumanization." *Political Behavior* 43, no. 2 (2021): 517-540.
- Atran, Scott. "The devoted actor: unconditional commitment and intractable conflict across cultures." *Current Anthropology* 57.S13 (2016): S192-S203.

#### Presentations

##### Synanon Cult

- Aron, Hillel. "The Story of This Drug Rehab-Turned-Violent Cult Is Wild, Wild Country—Caliber Bizarre." *Los Angeles Magazine* (2018): 52-66.

### **Week 4 (September 22) Leaders and Ideological Entrepreneurs**

**\*\*Assign Final Project and Dates for One-on-one rough draft meetings, and Oral Exam\*\***

#### Theory

- Hofmann, David C. "Quantifying and qualifying charisma: A theoretical framework for measuring the presence of charismatic authority in terrorist groups." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 38.9 (2015): 710-733.
- Nielsen, Richard A. *Deadly clerics: Blocked ambition and the paths to jihad*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
- Freedman, Michael. "Fighting from the Pulpit: Religious Leaders and Violent Conflict in Israel." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63.10 (2019): 2262-2288.
- McDermott, Rose. "Leadership and the strategic emotional manipulation of political identity: An evolutionary perspective." *The Leadership Quarterly* 31.2 (2020): 101275.



## Presentations

### Oleh Lyashko's Militia in the War in Donbas

- McPhedran, Charles. "Thug Politics, Kiev." *Foreign Policy* (2014).
- "With Stunts and Vigilante Escapades, a Populist Gains Ground in Ukraine." (2014): *The New York Times*
- "Hunting Separatists in Eastern Ukraine: Russian Roulette (Dispatch 56) *Vice News* (video).

## **Week 5 (September 29) Personality and Socialization into Violence**

**\*\*Review Sheet for the Midterm Exam\*\***

## Theory

- Elderfield, Jonathan. "This is 25: Looking back at Among the Thugs." (2015): *Howler*
- Kalmoe, Nathan P. "Mobilizing voters with aggressive metaphors." *Political Science Research and Methods* 7.3 (2019): 411-429.
- Haritos-Fatouros, Mika. "The official torturer: A learning model for obedience to the authority of violence." *Journal of applied social psychology* 18.13 (1988): 1107-1120.
- Buckels, Erin E., Paul D. Trapnell, and Delroy L. Paulhus. "Trolls just want to have fun." *Personality and Individual Differences* 67 (2014): 97-102.
- Moshagen, Morten, Ingo Zettler, and Benjamin E. Hilbig. "Measuring the dark core of personality." *Psychological Assessment* 32.2 (2020): 182.

## Presentations

### English Defence League

- Casciani, Domonic, "Who are the English Defence League? (2009): **BBC**.
- Trilling, Daniel, "Tommy Robinson and the far right's new playbook." (2018): *The Guardian*.

## **Week 6 (October 6) MIDTERM ORAL EXAM**

## **Week 7 (October 13) CASE Study of the January 6<sup>th</sup> Insurrection (\*\*ONLINE LECTURE\*\*)**

- *Day of Rage: How Trump Supporters Took the U.S. Capitol | Visual Investigations.* (2021): NYTimes Video
- Baum, Matthew, James Druckman, Matthew D. Simonson, Jennifer Lin, and Roy H. Perlis. "What I Saw on the Road to Insurrection: Internal Political Efficacy, Conspiracy Beliefs and the Effect of Depression on Support for the January 6th Storming of the Capitol." (2021): *Working Paper*.
- Van Dijcke, David, and Austin L. Wright. "Profiling Insurrection: Characterizing Collective Action Using Mobile Device Data." (2021): *Working Paper*.

## **Week 8 (October 20) Leftwing and Rightwing Extremism**

### Theory

- Conway III, Lucian Gideon, Shannon C. Houck, Laura Janelle Gornick, and Meredith A. Repke. "Finding the Loch Ness monster: Left-wing authoritarianism in the United States." *Political Psychology* 39, no. 5 (2018): 1049-1067.
- Nilsson, Artur, and John T. Jost. "The authoritarian-conservatism nexus." *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences* 34 (2020): 148-154.
- Homolar, Alexandra, and Georg Löfflmann. "Populism and the Affective Politics of Humiliation Narratives." *Global Studies Quarterly* 1.1 (2021).
- Frimer, Jeremy A., Mark J. Brandt, Zachary Melton, and Matt Motyl. "Extremists on the left and right use angry, negative language." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 45, no. 8 (2019): 1216-1231.

### Presentations

#### Killing of Alan Berg

- "The murder of Alan Berg in Denver: 25 years later." (2009): *The Denver Post*.
- Singular, Stephen. "Alan Berg: Talked to Death." (1985): Rolling Stone.

## **Week 9 (October 27) Vigilantism, Mano Dura, Revenge, and Othering**

### Theory

- Bateson, Regina. "The politics of vigilantism." *Comparative Political Studies* 54.6 (2021): 923-955.
- Jackson, Joshua Conrad, Virginia K. Choi, and Michele J. Gelfand. "Revenge: A multilevel review and synthesis." *Annual Review of Psychology* 70 (2019): 319-345.
- García-Ponce, Omar, Lauren Young, and Thomas Zeitzoff. "Anger and support for punitive justice in Mexico's drug war." (2021)

- Kenny, Paul D., and Ronald Holmes. "A new penal populism? Rodrigo Duterte, public opinion, and the war on drugs in the Philippines." *Journal of East Asian Studies* 20.2 (2020): 187-205.

#### Violence and Vigilantism in Mexico (Film Screening of *Cartel Land*)

- Chapters 8 and 12. Grillo, Ioan. *El Narco: Inside Mexico's criminal insurgency*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2012.
- Lopez, Oscar. "‘We’re Living in Hell’: Inside Mexico’s Most Terrified City." (2021): *The New York Times*.
- Johnson, Tim. "‘True Mexican hero?’ Founder of Mexico's vigilante movement under fire." (2014): *Christian Science Monitor*.
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### Week 10 (November 3) Anti-System Politics and Accelerationism

#### **\*\*Rough Draft Due\*\***

#### Theory

- Uscinski, Joseph E., Adam M. Enders, Michelle I. Seelig, Casey A. Klofstad, John R. Funchion, Caleb Everett, Stefan Wuchty, Kamal Premaratne, and Manohar N. Murthi. "American Politics in Two Dimensions: Partisan and Ideological Identities versus Anti-Establishment Orientations." *American Journal of Political Science* (2021).
- Arceneaux, Kevin, Timothy B. Gravelle, Mathias Osmundsen, Michael Bang Petersen, Jason Reifler, and Thomas J. Scotto. "Some people just want to watch the world burn: the prevalence, psychology and politics of the ‘Need for Chaos’." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B* 376, no. 1822 (2021): 20200147.
- Kydd, Andrew H., and Barbara F. Walter. "The strategies of terrorism." *International security* 31.1 (2006): 49-80.
- Beauchamp, Zack. "Accelerationism: the obscure idea inspiring white supremacist killers around the world." (2019): *Vox*.

#### Presentations

#### Christchurch Shooting

- Cave, Damien and Amanda Sexton. "New Zealand Gives Christchurch Killer a Record Sentence." (2020): *The New York Times*.

## **Week 11 (November 10) One-on-One Meetings**

## **Week 12 (November 17) Communication Technology and Radicalization**

### Theory

- Mitts, Tamar. "From isolation to radicalization: anti-Muslim hostility and support for ISIS in the West." *American Political Science Review* 113.1 (2019): 173-194.
- Zeitzoff, Thomas. "How social media is changing conflict." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61.9 (2017): 1970-1991.
- Rathje, Steve, Jay J. Van Bavel, and Sander van der Linden. "Out-group animosity drives engagement on social media." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118.26 (2021).
- Yanagizawa-Drott, David. "Propaganda and conflict: Evidence from the Rwandan genocide." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 129.4 (2014): 1947-1994.
- Marble, William, Salma Mousa, and Alexandra A. Siegel. "Can Exposure to Celebrities Reduce Prejudice? The Effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic Behaviors and Attitudes." *American Political Science Review* (2021): 1-18.

### Presentations

#### Communal Violence in Israel (2021)

- Beauchamp, Zack. "Israel's unraveling." (2021): *Vox*.
- Frankel, Sheera. "Lies on Social Media Inflammate Israeli-Palestinian Conflict." (2021): *The New York Times*.

## **Week 13 (November 24) THANKSGIVING (no class)**

## **Week 14 (December 1) Conspiracy Theories and Violence**

**\*\*Final Paper Due\*\***

### Theory

- Clayton, Katherine, Nicholas T. Davis, Brendan Nyhan, Ethan Porter, Timothy J. Ryan, and Thomas J. Wood. "Elite rhetoric can undermine democratic norms." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 118, no. 23 (2021).
- Osmundsen, Mathias, Alexander Bor, Peter Bjerregaard Vahlstrup, Anja Bechmann, and Michael Bang Petersen. "Partisan polarization is the primary psychological motivation behind political fake news sharing on Twitter." *American Political Science Review* (2021): 1-1
- Enders, Adam M., Joseph E. Uscinski, Casey A. Klofstad, Michelle I. Seelig, Stefan Wuchty, Manohar N. Murthi, Kamal Premaratne, and John R. Funchion. "Do Conspiracy Beliefs Form a Belief System? Examining the Structure and Organization of Conspiracy Beliefs." *Journal of Social and Political Psychology* 9, no. 1 (2021): 255-271.
- Radnitz, Scott. "Paranoia with a purpose: conspiracy theory and political coalitions in Kyrgyzstan." *Post-Soviet Affairs* 32.5 (2016): 474-489.

### Presentations

#### 1999 Russian Apartment Bombing

- Eckel, Mike. "Two Decades On, Smoldering Questions About The Russian President's Vault To Power." (2019): *RFERL*.

## **Week 16 (December 8-11) FINAL ORAL EXAM**