

COM 6425 – Symbolism in Terrorism (Spring)

<u>Instructor:</u>	Jonathan Matusitz, Ph.D.
<u>Course:</u>	Symbolism in Terrorism (COM 6425)
<u>Course meeting:</u>	Tuesday from 2:00 to 4:50 p.m. (UCF Main Campus, Communication Building, #143D)
<u>Office hours:</u>	Tues 5-7 p.m. (UCF Main Campus) and Wed and Thurs 4-6 p.m. (UCF-Sanford/Lake Mary)
<u>Contact:</u>	matusitz@knights.ucf.edu or 407-708-2830

Course Description

This course will consist of lectures, discussions, activities, and other teaching tools. Students will learn the skills and strategies necessary to analyze symbolic processes and dynamics in terrorism. For instance, students will learn to understand how terrorist groups use both physical symbols (e.g., objects, logos, flags, colors, etc.) and nonphysical symbols (e.g., symbolic timing, linguistic meaning, ideology, etc.) to accomplish their goals. This course is both theoretically driven and fact-focused. Specifically we will aim to:

- Discuss the five characteristics of symbolism and compare physical symbolism with nonphysical symbolism.
- Look at linguistic symbolism in terrorism (e.g., name-giving codes and terror glorification).
- Explore symbolic targets of terrorism (e.g., iconoclasm and cultural terrorism) and the impact of terrorism on the audience.
- Analyze symbolic culture, symbolic interactionism, and the organizational cultures of terrorist groups.
- Delve into the myths, rituals, and performative cults of terrorist groups. Of particular interest are positive and negative cults.
- Examine Hindu, Sikh, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim terrorism, as well as millennial death cults (e.g., Aum Shinrikyo).
- Explore the symbolic weapons of terrorism and focus on the role of female terrorism (both past and present).
- Look at the Jihadist visual motifs of terrorism (e.g., logos, flags, colors) through Conceptual Metaphor Theory.
- Investigate the role of semiotics (study of signs and symbols) and symbolism in the implements and tools of terrorism as well as in the targets of terrorism. Detailed case studies will be provided.
- Go into the major theoretical perspectives of symbolism in terrorism.

Course Assignments

The **Symbolism in Terrorism Case Analysis Paper** consists of analyzing a specific case of terrorism in which symbolism plays a role (e.g., the reason Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda chose 9/11 as a symbolic date to target the U.S.). The **Theory Paper** is a major project in this course. It consists of applying, in detail, a symbolic theory to terrorism. The **Theory Paper** also requires that each student turn in a proposal three weeks prior to turning the paper itself. All papers must strictly follow **APA**. The class will also have a **Midterm** and **Final Examination**, which both consist of two parts. The first part is a set of multiple-choice questions based on information in the course textbooks. The second part is composed of essay questions drawn from concepts explained during lectures and that are not necessarily in the textbooks. The Final Examination is NOT cumulative.

Below is the breaking down of the course grades. Whenever you receive a grade, please write down the points that you earned (on the right side of the sheet).

<u>Course Assignments</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Points Earned</u>
Symbolism in Terrorism Case Analysis Paper	February 16	40	____ / 40
Midterm Examination	March 15	140	____ / 140
Proposal for Theory Paper	April 5	40	____ / 40
Theory Paper	April 26	140	____ / 140
Final Examination	May 3	140	____ / 140
<u>TOTAL:</u>	500 possible points		____ / 500

Course Grade

- A: 450-500 points (that is, 90% and above)
- B: 400-449 points (that is, 80% and above)
- C: 350-399 points (that is, 70% and above)
- D: 300-349 points (that is, 60% and above)
- F: 0-299 points (that is, 0%-60%)

Grading Policies

- Grades are not negotiable. The professor will change your grade only if you have empirical evidence that the professor made a mistake of some sort.
- Due to privacy laws, no student will discuss his or her personal grade with the professor in the classroom. This will be done by email, during office hours, or by appointment.
- There will be no option for extra credits in this course. Besides, there will be no possibility for extra assignments to make up for a poor grade or an assignment that was not turned in.
- Grades will not be curved.
- The final grade will not be a “+” or “-.”
- **Grade posting:** students will be able to find their grades on Webcourses at the time the grades will be posted by UCF.

Late Assignments

You **MUST** take your exams and turn in all your assignments on time. If you cannot do this due to an **emergency** that is **documented and verifiable** and you **contact your professor immediately**, you may be permitted to turn in an assignment late at the professor’s discretion. Communicate with your professor in a timely manner. There are absolutely **no make-up assignments** for absences that are not documented, verifiable, and resulting from an extreme emergency.

If you are unable to attend class because you are sick or involved in a university-sanctioned activity (i.e., athletic competition), send the assignment to class with another student by class time on the due date or put it in my mailbox (located in the Nicholson School of Communication, Main Office) before the due date. If you hand in an assignment late (any time after the assignment has been collected), 20% per day will automatically be deducted from your grade on the assignment, regardless of the reason for the late assignment. Any assignment over five (5) days late will receive a zero (0).

A rigid policy is followed for the following reasons:

1. to encourage and emphasize the importance of meeting deadlines
2. to enable course time management
3. to maximize consistent grading
4. to schedule equal amounts of group and speech time for each student
5. to avoid attempting to determine the validity or priority of one student’s excuse over another
6. to ensure fair treatment for students who complete their work on time

Policies on Written Assignments

- For every paper in this class, you must turn in BOTH a printed (hard copy) version AND an email attachment of the paper. The title of the email attachment must bear your first name, your last name, and a short title of the assignment, as in the following: **JaneDoeFirstPaper** or **JohnDoeTheoryPaper**.
- Every email attachment of the paper must be sent to matusitz@knights.ucf.edu (nowhere else!).
- Failure to send me an attachment of the paper on the due date will result in a deduction of points or in a zero after five days (see policy on late assignments above). The cheap excuse that the Internet connection was not working is not acceptable.
- The same policy applies to the printed (hard copy) version of the paper. Papers must be turned in on the due date. Do not bring a floppy disk to the professor so that he can print the paper for you. You must print your own paper and give it on time.
- The paper in the email attachment and the hardcopy of the paper must be 100% identical.
- There are three reasons for doing all this. Email attachments of your papers will enable me to (1) keep your papers on records, (2) run your papers in plagiarism-detection programs (i.e., www.turnitin.com), and (3) make sure that no paper has been partially or totally written by another person (see section on Academic Misconduct).

Academic Misconduct

- Each assignment must be individual, original, and done completely by each student.

- **Academic Misconduct** includes (1) plagiarism (see *complete definition* below), (2) using someone else's work as one's own, (3) removing an examination from the classroom, (4) turning in the same work for more than one course, (5) unauthorized communication with another student during or about tests, (6) falsifying work, (7) turning in another student's name on an assignment when that student failed to contribute, (8) looking at another student's work during testing, (9) unauthorized collaboration on a writing assignment, (10) allowing another student to copy sentences from one's own written work, (11) bribery, intimidation, or excessive pressure on the instructor, (12) classroom interruptions, and (13) similar misconduct. In addition, students should never destroy or impede the work of other students. Students are expected to follow university policies as put forth in the UCF's Golden Rule.
- **Classroom disruption and disrespect:** the first step is a warning to the student, the second step is the loss of a letter grade for the student, and the third step is the removal of the student from the course (with a grade of F for the entire course).

Please carefully read the University policy on **academic misconduct**. Violating this code of conduct is a serious infraction. In most cases, the *minimum* penalty is a grade of F for the course; the maximum is expulsion from the university.

Definition of Plagiarism

Plagiarism: representing the words or ideas of another as one's own, including:

- direct quotation without attributing and indicating that the material is being directly quoted (e.g., quotation marks);
 - paraphrase without attribution;
 - paraphrase with or without attribution where the words in the original text remain substantially intact and are represented as the author's own;
 - expression in one's own words, but without attribution, of ideas, arguments, lines of reasoning, facts, processes, or other products of the intellect where such material is learned from the work of another and is not part of the general fund of common academic knowledge.
 - quotation, whether in whole or in part, of one's own work that was previously submitted to another professor or for another course (in other words, self-plagiarism is not allowed).
- As a rule, an instructor at the University of Central Florida has the responsibility of enforcing the academic code. If **academic misconduct** is suspected, the instructor will submit a report of alleged academic misconduct to the University. Again, in all cases, the *minimum* penalty requested for academic misconduct is the letter grade of F for the course.

Reasonable Accommodation

UCF is committed to providing reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities. Students with disabilities who require accommodations in this course are requested to speak with the professor as early in the semester as possible. Students with disabilities must be registered with the office of disability services prior to receiving accommodations in this course.

Email

Your instructor will contact you via your UCF email account (your UCF Knights email). Therefore, it is important that you use your UCF Knights email at all times.

Attendance

- Attendance is not mandatory. Because of the size of the class, the professor will not take the roll at the beginning or at the end of class. **However**, attendance is **mandatory** (1) during exams, (2) during reviews for examinations, (3) when written assignments are due, and (4) when assignment guidelines are to be explained by the professor in class.
- The professor strongly recommends that you attend as many lectures as possible. Keep up with the weekly reading assignments so that you will not fall behind.
- The professor will not tolerate interruptions of lectures due to chatting, cell phones, and so forth.
- **Tardiness:** if you happen to be late, please find a seat on the side (close to the entrance) or at the back of the classroom. Do NOT walk through the classroom when the lecture is being given.
- You are responsible for making up missed work or information covered in your absence. Although the professor can answer specific questions during his office hours, he will not give you his notes. You can ask notes from your classmates.

Course Schedule & Readings

Week 1

Jan. 12

Introduction to the course; description of course policies; and overview of the syllabus

Readings: *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, by J. Matusitz, 2015, Rowman & Littlefield – Chapters 1 & 2

Week 2

Jan. 19

Guidelines for writing the Symbolism in Terrorism Case Analysis Paper + APA guidelines

Readings: *The Spirit of Terrorism*, by J. Baudrillard, 2003, Verso (the whole book; but it is short!)

Week 3

Jan. 26

Readings: “Symbolism and Sacrifice in Terrorism,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 13, no. 1 (2002): 102-28, J. Dingley & M. Kirk-Smith

Week 4

Feb. 2

Deadline for selecting a topic for the Symbolism in Terrorism Case Analysis Paper

Readings: *Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism*, by J. Tuman, 2010, SAGE – Chapters 2, 3, & 4

Week 5

Feb. 9

Readings: “‘Muslims Are Not Terrorists:’ Islamic State Coverage, Journalistic Differentiation between Terrorism and Islam, Fear Reactions, and Attitudes toward Muslims,” *Mass Communication and Society* 20, no. 6 (2017): 825-48, C. von Sikorski, D. Schmuck, J. Matthes, & A. Binder

Week 6

Feb. 16

Symbolism in Terrorism Case Analysis Paper DUE

Readings: *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, by J. Matusitz, 2015, Rowman & Littlefield – Chapters 4, 5, 6, & 7

Week 7

Feb. 23

Readings: *Beyond the Spectacle of Terrorism: Global Uncertainty and the Challenge of the New Media*, by H. A. Giroux, 2016, Routledge, Chapters 3 & 4

Week 8

March 1

Guidelines for the Theory Paper + Review for the Midterm Examination

Week 9

March 8

Spring Break (NO CLASS)

Week 10

March 15

Midterm Examination (from 2:00 to 4:50 p.m. in our classroom)

Week 11

March 22

Deadline for selecting BOTH a theory and an artifact for the Theory Paper

Readings: *Terror in the Mind of God* (4th Ed.), by M. Juergensmeyer, 2017, University of California Press – Chapters 1, 2, & 5

Week 12

March 29

Readings: *Terror in the Mind of God* (4th Ed.), by M. Juergensmeyer, 2017, University of California Press – Chapters 6, 7, & 8

Week 13

April 5

Proposal for Theory Paper DUE

Readings: “Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 38, no. 1 (2015): 1-22, by Jytte Klausen

Week 14

April 12

Readings: *Symbolism in Terrorism: Motivation, Communication, and Behavior*, by J. Matusitz, 2015, Rowman & Littlefield – Chapters 10, 11, 12, & 14

Week 15

April 19

Readings: “Communication and Terrorism: A Terror Management Theory Perspective,” *Communication Research Reports*, 22, no. 1 (2005): 79-88, C. H. Miller & M. J. Landau

Week 16

April 26

Review for the Final Examination + Theory Paper DUE

Week 17

May 3

Final Examination (from 1:00 to 3:50 p.m. in our classroom)