

War and Terrorism: Advanced Seminar in Peace Studies

Spring 2006, Monday & Thursday 11:10-12:35, Sea Fox Seminar Room
Gray Cox, Davis, 3rd floor, Ext #326, gray@coa.edu
Office Hours MT 2-4 and other times by appointment or coincidence.

The Aims of the Seminar:

One of the central problems of our current time is defined by the signature events of the 9/11 attacks and the responses to them in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. What is the problem and how could it be resolved? This course is an advanced research seminar in human ecology designed to provide an experience in collaborative study aimed at trying to answer those two questions.

The problem seems most naturally to be characterized as a kind of conflict [*though perhaps some other concept is more appropriate,*] But a conflict of what sort? A personal vendetta between Bush and Bin Laden? A clash of civilizations? A struggle between the forces of McWorld and Jihad? A war on terror? A police activity to control monstrous criminal behavior? A civil war within Islamic countries or the umma at large?

And how might the conflict be resolved? Under what scenarios might someone win, lose, or transform the struggle into something new?

We want to draw on historical context and precedent as well as whatever theoretical models in psychology, sociology, law, ethics, peace studies, military science or other disciplines that might help to understand the conflict in a human ecological way – i. e. an interdisciplinary, intersperspectival, problem centered study that take all of the relevant stake holders into account. An important part of the work of this seminar will consist in reflecting on methodological questions about how best to do a human ecological study of this sort – including questions about what “interdisciplinary” means, what perspectives are and how dialogue and agreement can be developed between them, how stake holder can and should be included, what a “problem” is, et cetera.

And we want to work as a team to develop a way of understanding the conflict that could allow it to play out and resolve. Those are tasks for this seminar.

The underlying pedagogical goals for this seminar are to provide students with the opportunities:

- develop and perfect their skills in collaborative, self-critical approaches to human ecological research on issues in conflict and peace,
- to deepen and integrate their understandings of theoretical approaches and historical contexts for understanding conflicts,
- and to cultivate and refine their abilities to present research findings in effective ways

Participant Requirements and Evaluation:

Seminar participants will be expected to take an active role not only in responding to assigned texts but in developing readings and leading discussions of them. Work will be evaluated based on how well seminar participation, writing, presentations and leadership activities advance the common goals of the seminar in seeking to understand the conflict and find ways for it to be resolved. Work that advances these common goals

in collaborative ways is especially desired. A schedule of work assignments will be provided in an initial draft form but this will then be revised by the group as part of the process of collective discernment about how best to proceed in this study.

The seminar is best thought of as modeling the activities of a research group at a think tank or center for advanced studies. While the final product of the group may be a single consensus document, it may alternatively be a collection of two or more pieces representing competing points of view [along with appendices providing documentation and elaboration of the analysis developed]. The final product(s) will be presented at a public release session in a forum held in the last week of the term – in which external evaluators will be invited to review and critique the results.

The preliminary draft of requirements include, for each student:

- a powerpoint briefing on some arena of the struggle (e. g. Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, US, UK, Spain) from the point of view of the US
- a letter and/or video or powerpoint briefing on some arena of the struggle from the point of view of members of al Qaeda
- leadership of two class sessions on topics selected for research by the seminar group
- a report on the relevance of some theory of war for understanding the conflict (e.g. Clausewitz, Augustine, Fanon)
- class participation and work on short homework assignments and activities preparing for class
- participation in the development and presentation of the final report in both its written and oral forms

The provisional or draft weighting of these for final evaluation is 10% for each of the first four bullets, and 30% for the class participation and 30% for work on the final report and presentation.

The texts for the course will include:

- The Pentagon's New Map: War and Peace in the Twenty-first Century by Thomas P.M. Barnett (Paperback - May 3, 2005)
- Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden (Paperback) by Osama bin Laden, Bruce Lawrence (Editor), James Howarth (Translator)
- Dying to Win : The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism (Hardcover) Random House by Robert Pape
- Selections from some classic and contemporary texts – including websites listed on the portaportal at
- Selections discovered and jointly assigned by members of the seminar
- Daily major newspapers (THE NEW YORK TIMES, THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, et cetera – at least one per day)

Readings and task for the next seminar session. this Thursday, will be:

Osama Bin Laden, Messages to the World, pp. 3-30

Bush et. al., <http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nss.html>

Bring one or more examples (with exemplary texts) of something you consider to be an interdisciplinary study. Also, bring a short written statement as to what is interdisciplinary about it.