

# Extremism and the West

## University of Alicante

Spring 2012  
Class room: \_\_\_\_\_  
Class time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Credit Hours: 3

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Office Hours: \_\_\_\_\_

### Course description

This course examines the nature and role of extremism in the politics of Western nations through a study of extremist movements in the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. Movements analyzed include abolitionism, anti-abortion, ethnic nationalism, the radical left, radical environmentalism, and *jihadism*. It particularly analyzes propaganda produced by extremists themselves.

Extremism is one of the most significant political issues in the post-Cold War era. Yet there is no comprehensive theory of extremism in the social sciences. There are few publications on it. There are almost no courses on it. Terms like “extremism,” “fanaticism,” and “zealotry” are commonly used but rarely explained in the media. So, we have to start from scratch. The main goal of the course is to develop a working theory of extremism that can identify extremist organizations, understand their base of support, explain their role in politics, and evaluate their relation to a democratic society. Given that we are examining extremism from a fresh, critical perspective, we will not automatically assume that it is evil or undemocratic. Instead, we will follow our theory to whatever conclusions it leads to.

### Books and other required materials

The following books are required for the course:

- Steven Best and Anthony J. Nocella, II, eds., *Igniting A Revolution: Voices in Defense of the Earth* (AK Press 2006; ISBN 978-1904859567)
- Bruce Lawrence, ed., *Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama bin Laden* (Verso 2005; ISBN 978-1844670451)
- There are also a number of articles assigned. They are available as PDF files.

### Attendance policy

This is a course that merges political theory with history and current events. Bringing these together is done through reading and writing but also through discussion and debate. For this reason, attendance is important. As you would with any other missed appointment, call or email me if you will be absent for a class. You are responsible for all material missed due to absences.

### Course Objectives

By the end of the course you will be able to:

- Distinguish among extremist organizations
- Explain the social and political bases of support for such organizations
- Evaluate the impact of extremism on contemporary politics
- Compare and contrast the theories of the authors and movements studied
- Develop and apply your own theory of extremism

**Assignments**

1. Three analysis papers, ranging from 4-6 pages each (50 points each)
  2. Analysis of extremist propaganda (50 points)
  3. Weekly response papers (100 points)
- **Total points** possible for the course: 300. Final grades will be determined according to the following: 270-300 points = A, 240-269 = B, 210-239 = C, 180-209 = D, 179 or below = F.
  - **Late analysis papers:** Please contact me *in advance* if you anticipate problems turning them in on time. Otherwise, late analysis papers will be marked down one grade.
  - **Response papers:** Except weeks when analysis papers are due, every week you will turn in a 500-word (about 1 page single-spaced or 2 pages double-spaced) response paper to a question I have posed to you about the reading. The purpose of the response papers is to help you understand the main argument of the text and develop your critique of it. Each response is worth 10 points. I will count your best 10 out of a possible 12 response papers for the whole semester, for a total of 100 points. *No late response papers accepted.*
  - **Plagiarism:** If you plagiarize any part of your exam, analysis papers, or response papers, you will fail the course. Plagiarism means the deliberate use of someone else’s language, ideas, or other original material (i.e. material that is not common knowledge) without acknowledging the source.
  - Please turn off all cell phones and other electronic devices when in class. Laptops are permitted for note taking and other classroom uses, but not for surfing the web or “multitasking.” If you use your laptop for purposes outside of this course, I will ask you to stop bringing it to class.
  - Course content may vary from this outline to meet the needs of this particular group.
  - **NOTICE:** We will be discussing a lot of controversial issues and ideas in this class. You will *never* be required to adopt any particular viewpoint in this class. However, you will be required to read, view, discuss, and write about some pretty offensive stuff. If you think you might have difficulty doing this, please see me or consider dropping the class.

**COURSE OUTLINE AND SCHEDULE OF READINGS**

Please have the day’s assignment read *before* class. Your ability to participate and do well in the class depends on staying caught up on the readings. (P) = Available as a PDF.

Date	Topic	Reading
<b>I. Defining extremism and the political extraordinary</b>		
Week 1 Jan. 18		
Week 2 Jan. 23		Oxford English Dictionary entries on “extremism,” “fanaticism,” “zealotry,” “moderation” (P) Richard Hofstadter, “The Paranoid Style in American Politics” (P) Seymour Martin Lipset & Earl Raab, <i>The Politics of Unreason</i> chap. 1 (P)

Date	Topic	Reading
<b>II. Abolitionist extremists</b>		
Week 3 Jan. 30		Joel Olson, "Slavery in the United States" (P) Wendell Phillips, "Philosophy of the Abolition Movement" (P) William Lloyd Garrison, "To the Public" (P) Garrison, "No Compromise with Slavery" (P) Henry Highland Garnet, "Address to the Slaves of the United States" (P)
Week 4 Feb. 6		Douglas Linder, "The Trial of John Brown" (P) John Brown, "Words of Advice" (P) Brown, "Provisional Constitution" (P) Brown, "Interview with Mason, Vallandigham, and Others" (P) Brown, "Trial Speech" (P)
<b>III. The anti-abortion movement</b>		
Week 5 Feb. 13		Randall Terry, <i>Operation Rescue</i> chaps. 1, 8, 10-13 (P)
Week 6 Feb. 20		Paul Hill, "Defensive Action Statement" (P) Hill, "Defending the Defenseless" (P) Scott Roeder, "Post-Trial Statement" (P) Michael Bray, "Who Will You Blame?" (P) Dan Holman, "The Just End to a Violent, Wicked Man" (P)
<b>IV. The European radical left</b>		
Week 7 Feb. 27		<i>Red Army Faction: A Documentary History</i> , Preface, chaps. 1-2 (P) RAF, "Build the Red Army!" RAF, "The Urban Guerilla Concept" RAF, "Serve the People" RAF, miscellaneous communiqués (P) ANALYSIS #1 DUE
<b>V. Radical environmentalism</b>		
Week 8 March 5		Vanderheiden, "Radical Environmentalism in an Age of Antiterrorism" (P) ELF Press Office, "Get Involved" (P) <i>Igniting a Revolution</i> pp. 8-29, 37-58, 406-417, 211-224
Week 9 March 12		<i>Igniting a Revolution</i> pp. 92-101, 105-113, 178-185, 198-206, 284-333, 340-367, 372-374

Date	Topic	Reading
<b>VI. Ethnic nationalism and terrorism</b>		
Week 10 March 19		Irish Republican Army, <i>Green Book</i> v. 1 & 2 (P) Council on Foreign Relations, “Basque Fatherland and Liberty (ETA)” (P)  ETA (readings TBD)
Week 11 March 26		Ignacio Sánchez-Cuenca, “The Persistence of Nationalist Terrorism: The Case of ETA” (P)  ETA (readings TBD)
<b>VII. Islamic <i>jihad</i> and religious challenges to secularism</b>		
Week 12 April 2		<i>The Qur’an</i> chaps. 1, 2:1-138, 3:43-54, 3:140-152, 85, 103, 96, 99, 112 (read all <i>twice</i> ) (P) <b>ANALYSIS #2 DUE</b>
Week 13-14 April 9 & 16	<b>SPRING BREAK</b>	
Week 15 April 23		Gilles Kepel, <i>Muslim Extremism in Egypt</i> pp. 26-43 (P) Osama bin Laden, <i>Messages to the World</i> Introduction, chaps. 1-3, 5, 6
Week 16 April 30		bin Laden chaps. 10, 12-14, 16, 21-23
Week 17 May 7		Josh Lyons and Steven Nutt, “How a Boy Becomes a Martyr” (P) Diego Gambetta and Steffen Hertog, “Why are there so many Engineers among Islamic Radicals?” (P) Theory development workshop <b>PROPAGANDA ANALYSIS DUE</b>
Week 18 May 14		<b>ANALYSIS #3 DUE</b>