



Sociology 3363g (570)
Sociology of Terrorism
Fall/ Winter 2025-2026

Instructor: J. Michalski
Email: jmichal2@uwo.ca

Course Information

Calendar Description:

A sociological examination of the construction, causes, manifestations, and consequences of terrorism. This course explores the discursive construction of "terrorism" from dominant and subaltern perspectives; analyzes the causes and manifestations of terrorist actions; and engages in a comparison of the impact of responses to terrorism by the US and Canada.

Prerequisite(s): Third or fourth year standing in a Sociology or Criminology module.

Extra Information: 3 hours.

Course Weight: 0.50
Breadth: Category A
Subject Code: SOCIOLOG

Notice: Unless you have either the requisites for this course (fulfilment of pre-requisites, no anti-requisite conflicts), or special permission from your Dean to enrol in it, you may be removed from this course and it will be deleted from your record. This decision may not be appealed. You will receive no adjustment to your fees in the event that you are dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

King's University College at Western
Department of Sociology

Sociology 3363G, Section 570 (Winter 2026)

Sociology of Terrorism

ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Instructor: Dr. Joseph H. Michalski (email: jmichal2@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Mondays (1:30pm-2:30pm), Tuesdays (10:30am-11:30am) and by appointment

***Prerequisites:** Sociology 1020/1021E, plus third-year or fourth-year standing in one of the Sociology or Criminology modules.

***Anti-Requisites:** None

***Please note:** Students must ensure that their course selections are appropriate and accurately recorded, that all course prerequisites have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any anti-requisite course(s) that they have taken. Consult an academic counselor to clarify if needed. If students do not have the prerequisites for a course (and no written special permission from the Dean to enroll in the course), then the University reserves the right to cancel their registration in the course. This decision may not be appealed. The normal financial and academic penalties will apply to a student who is dropped from a course for failing to have the necessary prerequisites.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course surveys definitional, empirical, historical, and theoretical issues that pertain to the study of terrorism as a form of moralistic violence and social control. The main focus will be the study of the various causes and social conditions under which terrorism typically emerges. We conclude with the prospects for “ending terrorism,” or sociological conditions that might reduce terrorism in the modern world.

Key Course Learning Objectives. By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- Discuss the ways in which terrorism has been conceptualized and studied in the social sciences.
- Describe the general patterns and trends of terrorism over the past half century, including the key demographic and socio-cultural facets associated with both perpetrators and victims.
- Identify the most significant groups and ideologies associated with different “types” of terrorism, as well as those targeted by such groups.
- Evaluate the most important social scientific theories of radicalization and terrorism, including their relative strengths and weaknesses.
- Apply the requisite analytical tools to think clearly and reflexively about the nature of moralistic violence and what might drive individuals and groups to engage in such lethal violence.
- Be familiar with some of the research on why most terrorist groups eventually dissolve, as well as why some groups have persisted for many decades.

REQUIRED READINGS

The main text for the lectures and discussions will be:

Michalski, Joseph H. 2026. *Terrorism as Moralistic Violence*. London: Routledge. **Cost: \$100.00**

Students can purchase a hard copy from the UWO Book Store. In addition to the main text, selected articles will be posted on Brightspace as “supplemental readings” for certain lectures. Students must know their unique UWO username and password. Anyone who has forgotten the information should consult the Registrar’s office immediately (do not ask the instructor, as only the Registrar or IT specialists at the university have the information).

Important: Most of the course content, including lectures and supplemental readings, will be available through Brightspace. The materials will be posted in advance of each class. Students must know their unique, eight-character UWO username and password. Anyone who has forgotten the information should consult the Registrar’s office or the IT Department at King’s.

COURSE EVALUATION

Class Attendance/Participation (10%). Students should attend class regularly, participate, ask questions, engage in discussion, and contribute in a positive way. Attend all seminars to earn maximum credit.

Short Assignment (15%): Students will complete a case study of one specific “terrorist” incident since 9/11. Students will conduct independent research to: 1) describe the key details of the incident (who, what, how, when, where); 2) report on the nature of the group’s grievances, the type of terrorism, and, briefly, the social context of their grievances (including the views of the adversaries); 3) identify a general thesis and develop an argument as to why the incident occurred; and 4) comment on the impact and consequences of the attack. More administrative information will be provided in class. Due March 9.

Midterm Hourly Exam (20%): There will be a midterm hourly exam on February 9, in the form of “objective” questions covering the first five weeks of class and 4-5 short-answer questions.

Term Paper (25%): Students must submit a 6-8-page term paper on any aspect of terrorism that might interest them. The papers should: 1) describe the nature of the type of terrorism being investigated; 2) identify a general thesis and develop an argument to explain the phenomenon being investigated; 3) gather and report on some high-quality data and/or case studies from a valid public source (e.g., government statistics, crime reports, academic research, etc.) with respect to important trends or patterns; and 4) discuss the issue further in light of the evidence and present conclusions accordingly. Due April 6.

Final Exam (30%): Students will write an in-class, final exam during Western’s exam period April 12-30 (the exact date to be determined by the Registrar’s Office). The exam will cover both reading and lecture materials only for the second half of the course. **Note:** Students may *not* have cell phones or other electronic devices present during the exam. Students will be asked to sign an “honesty pledge” on the exams as well.

GRADING ASSIGNMENTS AND WORKLOAD EXPECTATIONS

Assignments will be marked using the standard policies of King’s University College’s Department of Sociology. Assignments will be read “blindly,” i.e., without knowing the identity of the author. Please consult the King’s University College Academic Programs website for additional details. Students are expected to keep up with the readings and complete the assignments by the due dates. If a student must miss an assignment due to a medical emergency, please review the “Course Outline Policies” below.

SESSION OUTLINE: DATES, TOPICS, AND REQUIRED READINGS

The following symbols are used to refer to the readings cited under the Required Readings section below:

M: Selected chapters from the Michalski book

S#: Supplemental online readings (posted on Brightspace)

Date	Topic	Required Readings
Week 1 (Jan. 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Overview • Grievances and Moralistic Violence in Sociological Perspective 	Syllabus M: Chap. 1
Week 2 (Jan. 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining and Conceptualizing Terrorism • Studying and Describing Terrorism 	M: Chap. 2 M: Chap. 3, S#1
Week 3 (Jan. 19)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrorism in Historical Perspective • History, Habitus, and “Waves” of Terrorism 	S#2 S#3
Week 4 (Jan. 26)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social-Psychological Approaches to Studying Terrorism • Radicalization: Part I 	S#4 S#5
Week 5 (Feb. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radicalization: Part II (Transformations and Pathways) • Understanding Group Dynamics and the Radicalization Process 	S#6 S#7
Week 6 (Feb. 9)	Midterm Exam	
Week 7 (Feb. 16)	Reading Week (No Classes!)	
Week 8 (Feb. 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pure Sociology” and the Explanation of Terrorism • An Integrated Theory of Lethal Terrorism 	S#8 M: Chap. 4
Week 9 (Mar. 2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Government and Labor Protest Movements • Left-Wing and Radical Marxist Terrorism 	S#9 M: Chap. 5
Week 10 (Mar. 9)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationalist and Separatist Movements • Short Assignment Due 	S#10 M: Chap. 6
Week 11 (Mar. 16)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious Terrorism and Sectarian Violence • Salafi and Jihadist Groups 	M: Chap. 7 M: Chap. 8
Week 12 (Mar. 23)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right-Wing and Hate Groups • Lone Wolf and Single-Issue Terrorist Groups 	M: Chap. 9 S#11
Week 13 (Mar. 30)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sociological Analysis of “Suicide Bombing” and “Martyrdom” • Social Networks, Social Media, and the Internet 	S#12 S#13
Week 14 (Apr 6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counter-Terrorism Efforts • Leaving Terrorism...Ending Terrorism? <p>Term Papers Due</p>	S#14 M: Chap. 10
Apr. 12-30	Final Exam Period	TBA

KING'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE

GENERAL COURSE POLICIES

2025-2026

1. Academic Accommodations, Consideration for Absences

Academic Accommodation (Accessibility)

Accessibility Services works to ensure that academic programs are accessible to all students, and supports students who may have a condition related to, but not limited to, vision, hearing, mobility, different ways of learning, mental health, chronic illnesses, chronic pain, autism spectrum disorder, ADD/ADHD, and temporary conditions (beyond short-term academic consideration). Accessibility Services provides recommendations for accommodation based on medical documentation or psychological and cognitive assessment. The accommodation policy can be found here [Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities](#). Information on Accessibility Services at King's can be found [here](#).

Academic Consideration for Student Absence

If a student is unable to meet a course requirement due to substantial but temporary extenuating circumstances (medical or compassionate), they should follow the procedures below.

In some cases, where instructors have built flexibility into their assessments, this flexibility will already address consideration needs.

Requests for academic consideration should be directed to the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration. Requests must be made as soon as possible and no later than 48 hours after the missed assessment.

As a rule, documentation is required for academic consideration. For academic consideration requests on medical grounds, the Student Medical Certificate is available at https://www.kings.uwo.ca/kings/assets/File/currentStudents/courses_enrollment/exams_and_tests/SMC-Feb-2025.pdf.

Students are permitted one academic consideration request without supporting documentation per term per course.

Instructors may designate one assessment per half-course weight as requiring formal supporting documentation. Please refer to the course outline for each course.

For further information, please see:

https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration_Sep24.pdf

Absences from Final Examinations

If you miss the Final Exam, contact the Academic Advising Office of your faculty/college of registration as soon as you are able to do so. They will assess your eligibility to write the Special Examination (the name given by the University to a makeup Final Exam).

You may also be eligible to write the Special Exam if you are in a “Multiple Exam Situation” (e.g., more than 2 exams in 23-hour period, or more than 3 exams in a 47-hour period).

If a student fails to write a scheduled Special Examination, the date of the next Special Examination (if granted) normally will be the scheduled date for the final exam the next time this course is offered. The maximum course load for that term will be reduced by the credit of the course(s) for which the final examination has been deferred. See the Academic Calendar for details (under [Special Examinations](#)).

Religious Accommodation

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give notice in writing to the instructor and Academic Advising Office if a course requirement will be affected by a religious holiday/observance. Notice must be given as early as possible, and no later than two weeks prior to an examination, and one week prior to a midterm test date. It is the responsibility of such students to inform themselves concerning the work done in classes from which they are absent and to take appropriate action.

2. Support Services

Accessibility, Counselling and Student Development at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-services/>

Students experiencing emotional or mental health distress can access services at King's University College: <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/campus-services/student-support-services/personal-counselling/>

Good2talk is a good online and phone 24/7 resource for students and is available in English, Mandarin, and French: <https://good2talk.ca>, 1-866-925-5454

MentalHealth@Western provides a complete list of options about how to obtain help:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/

Academic Support Services at King's University College:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/academic-resources/>

GBSV Support:

King's is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced sexual or gender-based violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at:

<https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

You can reach someone supports at Kings by emailing Care@kings.uwo.ca or calling 519-930-4640 to reach a social worker who can offer help.

You can also reach Western's Gender-Based Violence & Survivor Support Case Manager by [email](#) or by calling 519-661-3568.

Further supports can be found on this website: <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/safe-campus/gender-and-sexual-violence/>

See also https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html

University Students' Council offers many valuable support services for students, including the health insurance plan: <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

3. Statement on Use of Electronic Devices

Use of Electronic Devices: Unless explicitly stated otherwise, you are not allowed to have a cell phone, or any other electronic device, with you during tests or examinations. Unauthorized possession of such a device during a test or examination constitutes an academic offence.

Use of Laptops, Tablets, and Smartphones in the Classroom: King's University College at Western University acknowledges the integration of new technologies and learning methods into the curriculum. The use of electronic devices such as laptop computers, tablets, or smartphones can contribute to student engagement and effective learning. At the same time, King's recognizes that instructors and students share jointly the responsibility to establish and maintain a respectful classroom environment conducive to learning.

The use of electronic devices by students during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., shall be for matters related to the course at hand only. Students found to be using electronic devices for purposes not directly related to the class may be subject to sanctions under the Student Code of Conduct; see <https://www.kings.uwo.ca/current-students/student-affairs/code-of-student-conduct1/>

Inappropriate use of electronics (e.g., laptops, tablets, smartphones) during lectures, seminars, labs, etc., creates a significant disruption. As a consequence, instructors may choose to limit the use of electronic devices in these settings. In addition, in order to provide a safe classroom environment, students attending in-person class sessions are strongly advised to operate laptops with batteries rather than power cords.

4. Statement on Academic Offences

King's is committed to academic integrity. Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, is posted at

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

It is expected that students will submit work that is truly their own, completed without external assistance (human or artificial) except as explicitly permitted by the course instructor. Check with your instructor on what tools, including generative AI (ChatGPT, translation tools, grammar-checking tools) are permitted in the course. Because a tool is permitted in one course, that does not mean it is permitted in other courses.

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system; see <https://elearningtoolkit.uwo.ca/tools/Originality Reports - TurnItIn.html>.

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

5. Copyright of Course Material

Lectures and course materials, including PowerPoint presentations, tests, outlines, and similar materials are protected by copyright. Faculty members are the exclusive owner of copyright in those materials they create. Students may take notes and make copies for their own use. Students may not allow others to reproduce or distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly (whether or not a fee is charged) without the express written consent of a faculty member. Unauthorized sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

Similarly, students own copyright in their own original papers and exam essays. If a faculty member wishes to post a student's answers or papers on the course website, they should ask for the student's written permission.

6. Use of Recordings

Participants in this course are not permitted to record the sessions, except where recording is an approved accommodation and/or the participant has the prior written permission of the instructor. Unauthorized recording and/or sharing of class content is subject to academic discipline.

7. Policy on Attendance

Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class or laboratory periods in any course, will be reported to the Dean of the Faculty offering the course, after due warning has been given. On the recommendation of the department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean of that Faculty, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination in the course.