

Sociology Of Terrorism



Alessandro Orsini

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

aorsini@luiss.it

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Alessandro Orsini



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Syllabus

PROFESSORS	Alessandro Orsini
COURSE CODE	T060
GENERAL DISCIPLINE (SSD)	SPS/07
COURSE YEAR	3
SEMESTER	I Semestre
PARTITION OF STUDENTS	0
CREDITS	6
TOTAL WORKLOAD	150
TOTAL LESSON HOURS	48
TEACHING LANGUAGE	English
INSTRUCTIONAL GOALS	Analyzing and understanding radicalization leading to terrorism and political violence through sociological lens
INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOMES	At the end of the course, students should be able to analyze radicalization leading to terrorism on the basis of the most important scientific contributions to the field, in order to avoid common sense explanations
PREREQUISITES	<p>The prerequisite condition is the willingness to participate.</p> <p>The sociology of terrorism course is based on classroom participation that includes exchanges between instructor and students. Students are also required to give class presentations</p>
COURSE CONTENTS	Radicalization leading to terrorism and political violence; doing ethnography within violent groups; micro-sociology of violence. The everyday life in a fascist militia. How to make direct contact with violent people in order to conduct an ethnographic research. Talking about his own experience, Professor Alessandro Orsini also analyzes the psychological costs that the sociologist must pay when he interacts with men and women who, in addition to proudly claiming credit for the homicides they have committed, affirm the importance of continuing to kill in order to salvage humanity's future.

REFERENCE BOOKS	1) Alessandro Orsini, "Sacrifice. My Life in a Fascist Militia", Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press 2017; 2) Alessandro Orsini, "What Everybody Should Know About Radicalization and the DRIA Model" in "Studies in Conflict and Terrorism" (2020) PLUS 6 academic articles and reports that will be distributed at any class.
TEACHING METHODS	The teaching method is based on the idea that the professor is a "conductor" who encourages students to take part in a debate at any class
ASSESSMENT METHOD	Oral Exam
THESIS ASSIGNMENT CRITERIA	Only students, who pass the oral exam with 28, 29 or 30/30 can be assigned the Master thesis
EXTENDED PROGRAM AND REFERENCE READING MATERIAL	
WEEK 1 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT	What is a "terrorist by vocation"? Introducing the difference between Cognitive Radicalization and Violent Radicalization. Radicalization is a series of stages or phases through which the individual passes toward a worldview that legitimizes violence as a justifiable and effective means of achieving group objectives.
WEEK 2 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT	Fathali M. Moghaddam's Staircase to Terrorism is included in the category of the "processual" radicalization models aiming at reconstructing the chronological and existential phases that transform an individual into a terrorist.
WEEK 3 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT	One of the most cited models of radicalization is Silber and Bhatt's four-phase radicalization process. According to Silber and Bhatt's model, radicalization can be segmented along four phases: the pre-radicalization phase; the self-identification phase; the indoctrination phase; and finally, the jihadization phase. The pre-radicalization phase, otherwise referred to as "the point of origin," is the period of time at the start of the radicalization process that describes individuals prior to being exposed to "Salafi Islam."
WEEK 4 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT	Can terrorism be seen as a form of "vile" violence? The typical terrorist act can be considered part of the sociological category known as "vile violence" that is the act of striking out at a victim after having placed him or her in a desperate situation that does not allow for any escape. The importance of sociologist Randall Collins in the study of terrorism and his book: "Violence. A Micro-sociological Theory." To use violence in an effective manner, terrorists must control the flow of adrenaline that invades their bodies when they are ready to kill their victims. As is true for all people, terrorists also fear physical clashes; they fear killing and being killed. How do they control this fear and remain lucid when they shoot?

WEEK 5 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

Marc Sageman's theory about how one becomes a terrorist and why is crucial to understanding radicalization. Sageman shows that, for the vast majority of the mujahedin, social bonds predated ideological commitment, and it was these social networks that inspired alienated young Muslims to join the jihad. These men, isolated from the rest of society, were transformed into fanatics yearning for martyrdom and eager to kill. The tight bonds of family and friendship, paradoxically enhanced by the tenuous links between the cell groups (making it difficult for authorities to trace connections), contributed to the jihad movement's flexibility and longevity.

WEEK 6 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

One of the milestones in the studies on radicalization is "The Psychology of Terrorism," written by John Horgan, firstly published in 2005. According to Horgan, the reasons and the experiences that can lead to radicalization can be various. That is why researchers always run the risk of distortion. It is never easy to discover what lies behind such a radical lifestyle choice with no return. The same terrorists too, when they are interviewed, aren't able to give a clear-cut answer to the question "Why did you become a terrorist?"

WEEK 7 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

The idea of radicalization as a resocialization process is crucial in "Radical Islam Rising," written by Quintan Wiktorowicz. The book, based on participant observation, aims at understanding how al-Muhajiroun – a radical Islamist movement that has also praised the 9/11 attack – rebuilds the identity of its new members, inviting them to take part in its activities. Wiktorowicz aims at understanding the reasons why a rational man can accept both risks and costs deriving from adhering to an Islamist

WEEK 8 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

Lawrence Kuznar tries to explain the path toward terrorism, combining prospect theory with the concept of relative privation. Prospect theory is a decision theory, created by the psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, and it aims at describing how individuals make a decision in a dangerous condition. In the article "Risk sensitivity and terrorism," published in 2007, Kuznar notes that poverty is not the decisive element of radicalization.

WEEK 9 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko are the authors of "Friction," which John Horgan described as "the most important book about radicalization." McCauley and Moskalenko explained, better than anyone else, that the radicalization phenomenon is very complicated, and proceeded to divide it in three levels: individual radicalization, group radicalization, and mass radicalization.

WEEK 10 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

"In Clandestine Political Violence," Donatella della Porta, as McCauley and Moskalenko, concentrates on the "mechanisms" of radicalization. "Clandestine Political Violence" analyses the mechanisms at the origin of a chain of interaction, determining the three basic phases of a violent clandestine movement, namely onset, persistence and demise.

WEEK 11 / ON LINE AND ON CAMPUS LECTURES CONTENT

The DRIA model was first published in Alessandro Orsini's "Anatomy of the Red Brigades" (2009) and further developed in a series of articles and books devoted to the jihadi terrorists who succeeded in carrying out terror attacks in the West between 2004 and 2018. Unlike those terrorism scholars who view ideology as an after-the-fact rationalization, the DRIA model conceives of ideology as the necessary, albeit inadequate, condition for accepting the idea of killing and being killed. DRIA is an acronym that stands for:
Disintegration of Social Identity
Reconstruction of Social Identity through a Radical Ideology Integration in a Revolutionary Sect
Alienation from the Surrounding World. The DRIA model is based on the analysis of the lives of thirty-nine jihadi or terrorists

**WEEK 12 / ON LINE AND ON
CAMPUS LECTURES
CONTENT**

"The Three Pillars of Radicalization" by Arie W. Kruglanski, Jocelyn J. B elanger e Rohan Gunaratna (2019) contains one of the most interesting and well-researched theories of radicalization, attaching equal importance to radical ideology as does the DRIA model. The three authors offer a psychological perspective on extremism as a general phenomenon of which radicalization leading to terrorism is just a particular case.

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