**Gender, terrorism and political violence**

**2 credit – Fall**

Dr Sarah Smith

**Course description and approach**

Terror and counter-terror continue to dominate global security agendas. Recent elections in the UK, US and France have all been in part characterised by global fears on the threat of terrorist violence. Yet arguably understandings of and responses to the use of terrorist violence have done little to ameliorate the threat over the preceding 15 years. As such, this unit critically examines terrorism and counter-terror strategies through the lens of gender and feminist IR and security perspectives. It suggests that gender is a fundamental category of analysis in understanding the discourse on terrorism as a security threat and responses to it. The course explores questions such as: how do gendered assumptions imbue who is labelled terrorist and who is not?; how does gender shape the impact of terrorist violence?; what constitutes terrorist violence and why?; what role do women and gender play in violent extremist groups?; and how are counter-terror and countering extremist programs inherently shaped by gendered assumptions? These questions are explored through the lens of feminist security studies theory and the extensive contributions of gender IR perspectives. These frameworks are applied to discourses on and representations of terrorism, extremism and political violence; as well as national and international policy responses.

**Learning outcomes**

1. Understand feminist security perspectives and what they bring to the study of terrorism, extremism and political violence.
2. Understand how gender norms and identities shapes and is shaped by security narratives pertaining to terrorist violence.
3. Critically reflect on how feminist and gender perspectives challenge traditional understandings of ‘security’, and in particular relation to terrorism and political violence.
4. An ability to apply a gender lens to both dominant narratives on terrorism as a global security threat, and to the policy responses that are adopted in response.
5. Ability to apply gender international frameworks to key concepts in studying terrorism – such as gender perspectives on the state, sovereignty and security.

**Course delivery**

1 x 100 minute seminar per week; first 30 minutes of which will be delivered lecture style. The remainder will be conducted as a seminar with students leading discussion.

**Assessment**

Participation = 10%

Seminar leadership/discussant = 10%

Critical commentary papers (x2) = 40%

Policy briefing paper = 40%

*Participation– 10%, ongoing.*

As a major component of this course is seminar leadership, active participation from all students is required. You are expected to attend every seminar and engage actively in the conversation, based on the weekly readings and your understanding/interpretation of them. Please come to each class prepared for informed discussion

*Seminar leadership/discussant – 10%, TBC*

Each student will serve as seminar discussant for one seminar in this course, to be assigned in the first week. Discussants will:

* Briefly summarise the main message and contribution of the weekly readings.
* Provide an assessment of the key arguments.
* Highlight the relevance of the readings to the weeks topic.
* Stimulate discussion by posing 2-3 questions for discussion, and leading discussion from there.

This task is designed to enable students to demonstrate their ongoing engagement with the course material, and to develop their oral communication skills.

*Critical commentary 1 – 20%, due: week 4*

Write a 750 word critical commentary (also known as a review) of: H. Dexter (2012) ‘Terrorism and violence: another violence is possible?’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 5(1): 121-137.

In particular you should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the claim that “the category of terrorism […] serves to legitimise violence by suggesting that an alternative violence is possible, violence that only targets the guilty, that only produces what is intended, that does not communicate a message (of fear) and that serves a progressive purpose.”

*Critical commentary 2 – 20%, due: week 8*

Write a 750 word critical commentary (also known as a review) of: C. Gentry (2015) ‘Epistemological failures: everyday terrorism in the West’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8(3): 362-382.

In particular you should evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the claim to “problematise the disparate levels and types of attention paid to similar violences globally, whereby violence against women in the developing world is seen as a security concern to the West, and yet violence against women in the West is minimised, ignored and/or individualised.”

*Policy briefing paper – 40%, due: Friday week 12.*

Prepare a 2500-word policy briefing paper on a particular issue or challenge of “gender, terrorism and political violence” of your choosing. As the name suggests, the purpose of a briefing paper is to “inform [someone – usually a decision maker] thoroughly in advance" about a particular issue. The objective is to provide a clear and concise exposition of the issue(s) under consideration, the associated policy dimensions and implications, and recommendations for action. Your brief should include the following elements:

* Specification of who the brief is for;
* A clear statement of the topic of the brief;
* Background to the issue;
* Analysis of the issue in terms of policy implications and options;
* Conclusions and recommendations for action;
* A list of references (Harvard in-text referencing should be used for the brief).

Further guidance will be provided during the term.

**Reading schedule:**

**Week 1: Feminist lenses on security and violence**

S. Whitworth (2014) ‘Feminisms’, in P. Williams (ed.) *Security studies: an introduction,* London: Routledge.

L. Shepherd (2013) ‘Feminist Security Studies’, in L. Shepherd (ed.) *Critical approaches to security: an introduction to theory and methods,* London: Routledge.

Further reading:

A. Sisson Runyan & V. Spike Peterson (2013) *Global gender issues in the new millennium,* 4th ed, Westview Press. Chapter 4: Global security – gendered violence.

**Week 2: Understanding terrorism and political violence**

H. Dexter (2012) ‘Terrorism and violence: another violence is possible?’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 5(1): 121-137.

C. Gentry & L. Sjoberg (2014) ‘Terrorism and political violence’, in L. Shepherd (ed.) *Gender matters in global politics,* London: Routledge, pp. 120-130.

**Week 3: The gendered ‘other’ – intersections of race and gender**

M. Nayak (2006) ‘Orientalism and ‘saving’ US state identity after 9/11’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8(1): 42-61

L. Philipose (2007) ‘The politics of pain and the uses of torture’, *Signs* 32(4): 1047-1071.

Further reading:

J. Zine (2008) ‘Between Orientalism and fundamentalism: Muslim women and feminist engagement’ in K. Rygiel et al. (eds.) *(En)gendering the War on Terror,* Aldershot: Ashgate, pp. 27-49.

M. Khalid (2011) ‘Gender, orientalism and representations of the “other” in the war on terror’, *Global Change, Peace & Security* 23(1): 15-29.

**Week 4: Women as agents of political violence**

S. Parashar (2010) ‘Women, militancy and security’, in L. Sjoberg (ed.) *Gender and International Security,* London: Routledge: 168-187.

M. Alison (2004) ‘Women as agents of political violence: gendering security’, *Security Dialogue* 35(4): 447-463.

Further reading:

L. Sjoberg & C. Gentry (2007) *Mothers, monsters, whores: women’s violence in global politics,* London & New York: Zed Books, pp. 58-88 (Chapter 3: Triple transgressions at Abu Ghraib).

**Week 5: Violence against women and terrorism**

C. Gentry (2015) ‘Epistemological failures: everyday terrorism in the West’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 8(3): 362-382

C. Mackinnon (2006) ‘Women’s September 11th: Rethinking the International Law of Conflict’, *Harvard International Law Journal* 47(1): 1-31.

**Week 6: State terrorism and gender violence**

S. Meger (2016) *Rape loot pillage: the political economy of sexual violence in armed conflict.* Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapter 4: Sexual Violence as an instrument of terror/torture.

**Week 7: Women in national liberation struggles**

P. Whaley Eager (2008) *From freedom fighters to terrorists: women and political violence,* London: Routledge. Chapter 4: The ‘wretched of the earth’ rebel: women and wars of national liberation.

**Week 8: Gender and representations of terrorist/political violence**

Tanya Narozhna chapter in L. Shepherd and L. Åhäll (eds.) 2012. *Gender, agency and political violence,* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

D. Naaman (2007) ‘Brides of Palestine/Angels of Death: media, gender and performance in the case of Palestinian female suicide bombers’, *Signs* 32(4): 933-955.

Further reading:

L. Åhäll, 2012. “Motherhood, myth and gendered agency in political violence.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14 (1): 103-120

**Week 9: Gender and the ‘war on terror’**

K. Ayotte & M. Husain (2005) ‘Securing Afghan women: neocolonialism, epistemic violence and the rhetoric of the veil’, *NWSA Journal* 17(3): 112-133.

K. Lee-Koo (2008) ‘War on terror/war on women’, in A. Bellamy et al. (eds) *Security and the War on Terror,* New York: Routledge, pp. 42-53.

Further reading

D. Cornell (2002) ‘For RAWA’, *Signs* 28(1): 433-435.

L. Sjoberg (2010) ‘Gendering the empire’s soldiers: gender ideologies, the US military and the “war on terror”’, in L. Sjoberg & S. Via (eds.) *Gender, war and militarism: feminist perspectives,* California: Praeger.

L. Shepherd (2006) ‘Veiled references: Constructions of gender in the Bush administration discourse on the attacks on Afghanistan post-9/11’, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8(1): 19-41.

**Week 10: Policy**

K. Brown (2008) ‘The promise and perils of women’s participation in UK mosques: the impact of securtisation agendas on identity, gender and community’, *British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 10(3): 472-491.

J. Gaudry Haynie and C. de Jonge Oudraat (2017) ‘Women, gender and terrorism: policies and programming’, *Women in International Security Policy Brief*. January 2017. <http://wiisglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/Women-Gender-and-Terrorism-Policies-and-Programming.pdf>

**Week 11: Global governance of terrorism – ‘CVE’ meets ‘WPS’**

F. Ni Aolain (2016) ‘The ‘war on terror’ and extremism: assessing the relevance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda’, *International Affairs* 92(2): 275-291.

**Week 12: Where to now for research on women, gender and terrorism?**

L. Sjoberg ‘The study of women, gender and terrorism’, in C. Gentry & L. Sjoberg (eds.) *Women, gender and terrorism,* Athens & London: The University of Georgia Press, pp. 227-239.