

COURSE DESCRIPTION

COURSE: TERRORISM AND DEMOCRACY

TEACHING LANGUAGE: English

SEMESTER: 2 – Summer 2009-2010

TOTAL LECTURE HOURS: 30

SCIENTIFIC FIELD: SPS/04

LECTURER: Patricia Springborg office E 512 c
(⇒ patricia.springborg@unibz.it)

PREREQUISITE: None

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Terrorism is the curse of the modern age, but this project is designed to show that terrorism and democracy are not antithetical but relational, belonging to a syndrome of state-legitimation characteristic of modernity. Terrorism, in the form of state terrorism, was born with modernity in the French Revolution and became generalized when it was mimicked by popular movements. We hypothesize that standard discussions of terrorism and international security are incapable of finding solutions to the problem due to their failure to interrogate their own presuppositions. It is doubly fallacious to believe that democracy is a technique for matching elites and voters on the analogy of economic products finding their consumers, and at the same time promulgate democracy as a moral imperative. Modern democracy is the outcome of complex processes of state-transformation presupposing robust social movements. In this field there are no 'shoulds'. State legitimation depends on affectivity and the legitimacy of regimes in fact obtaining. Modern regimes have their own ways of obtaining it, which do not rule out terror and revolutionary war. Policies of democratization may or may not find their adherents, depending less upon their moral appeal than upon their promise to provide need-satisfiers in the form of social welfare and public goods.

EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES:

This course has several objectives but one single event as its focus. In 9/11 we have the tragic demonstration of failed theory, whose consequences, in the Bush doctrine of 'exporting democracy' as a solution to 'exporting terror', demand public evaluation. We plan to take this event as a microcosm of the interface between theory and policy to show that, far from being a quasi-cosmic happening beyond the realm of human power or reason to prevent (as it has been received), 9/11 was precisely a contingent event that was the outcome of 'normal' social processes.

Students will be introduced to one of the most important current debates in the social sciences, the vulnerability of democracy to terrorism. It will a) provide them with a context for thinking about politics today; b) give them some understanding of the continuity of political issues between past, present and future; as well as c) introducing them to systematic thinking about democracy in the face of this very modern problem.

TEACHING FORMAT: the course will be conducted in combined lecture/seminar format to permit in-depth discussion. Students will be required to read intensively one of the articles placed in special reserve and to discuss it in teams.

ASSESSMENT: Final exam 60%, class work 40%.

READING LIST: to be supplied