

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO**  
**Department of Sociology**  
**2016-2017**  
**Sociology 4485-001**  
**Special topics: Terrorism**  
**Thursdays 2:30-5:30 SSC-3018**

**Instructor(s)**

Prof. Laura Huey

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Office hours: by appointment; usually before or after class.

**Course Description**

This course is designed to give students direct access to research currently being conducted in the field of violent extremism. Drawing on Prof. Huey's own research in the area of pro-Jihadist networks, students will be afforded empirically tested insights into the following topics: Al-Qaeda and the birth of the Islamic State, processes of radicalization (online and in the real world), foreign fighters, women's roles within pro-jihad networks and different techniques for studying pro-jihadist groups.

To be clear: this is NOT a survey course and students will NOT be introduced to wider theoretical and empirical discussions on the use of terrorism and other forms of violent extremism conducted by a range of actors. It is meant to give students an opportunity to take a birds-eye view into work currently being conducted by UWO's CVE Research Lab.

**Prerequisite(s):** Enrolment in fourth year of the Honors Specializations or Honors Double Major in Sociology. Unless you have either the requisites for this course or written special permission from your Dean to enroll in it, you will 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.

**Antirequisite(s) : none**

**Learning Objectives**

1. To learn how research into violent extremism is conducted.
2. To better understand processes of radicalization.
3. To gain insight into the different roles actors play within pro-jihadist networks.

**Required Texts**

There is no text for this class.

## **Evaluation**

Develop Meme project	40%
Evaluate Meme project	50%
Participation	10%

This course has been exempted by the dean's office from University Senate rules requiring assessment of work accounting for 15% of your final grade, prior to the deadline for withdrawal from a course without academic penalty. You will not receive 15% of your grade prior to the deadline to drop the course.

## **Meme project**

Students will form teams of 3-4 participants. Those teams will be responsible for developing a 'meme' campaign aimed at countering radical violence. This campaign will entail:

1. Collaboratively developing several 'memes' that you will test on friends and family for their input (I expect each team member to contribute at least one meme to your team project).
2. Your team will present each of these memes on February 9<sup>th</sup> and receive class feedback
3. Your team will then select your strongest meme (i.e. the one you believe will be most effective in targeting your prospective audience) and submit to me on February 16<sup>th</sup> a portfolio consisting of each of your memes, the one you selected to submit to the overall project and the rationale for why you chose this meme.

The rationale and tools for developing this campaign will be explained to you in the first class and you will also be provided with a detailed analysis of pro-IS propaganda on February 9<sup>th</sup> that will help you strengthen the work you will develop.

To grade your work on the memes I will be relying on two factors. First, I will have each team member submit a written evaluation of other team mates' performance on the tasks (which will ensure everyone pulls their weight). Two, I will submit the memes to an independent panel of experts for their opinion. Their feedback will be provided to you.

## **Meme evaluation**

The second part of this assignment requires you to evaluate the effectiveness of your selected meme through two measures: 1. a Facebook meme campaign that you will create and 2. A Twitter meme campaign that you will also create. Your meme campaigns will be 'live' on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. They will run for 2 weeks (until March 16<sup>th</sup>). Your team will be required to:

1. Evaluate the results of both your Twitter and Facebook campaigns by developing both quantitative measures (i.e. Statistics on number of likes or

- dislikes) and qualitative measures (ie. The content of some of comments/feedback you receive).
2. Present the final evaluations to me in written form on March 30<sup>th</sup>.

To be clear: I will not be marking your project solely based on your performance based on your evaluations. I will be marking the evaluations for the rigor with which you conducted them. This will remove any temptation to have friends and family 'like' memes and drive up scores.

### **Missed Exam/assignment policies**

Send me an email then take yourself and all relevant document immediately to the relevant Academic Counseling office. Academic Counseling will then send me an email informing me of a request to provide accommodation. Please do NOT bring your documentation to me or ask me about making exceptions for you or your situation. Also see the attached policy section regarding missed exams and assignments.

Please note that this syllabus does NOT constitute a legal contract. Although we will stick fairly closely to the topics/schedules outlined herein, I reserve the right to make adjustments as necessary.

## **Lecture Schedule**

**Week 1 – January 5** – Course introduction/meme project

**Week 2 – January 12** – **class is cancelled today**

**Week 3 – January 19** – The origins and rise of the Islamic State

**Week 4 – January 26** – **Guest speaker:** Tareq Mokdad

**Week 5 – February 2** – radicalization and recruitment

**Week 6 – February 9** – Propaganda (and how this class is going to develop counter-messaging)

**Week 7 - February 16** – women's roles within pro-jihadist networks

**Week 8 - February 23** – **Spring break**

**Week 9 – March 2** – studying cyberterrorism online

**Week 10 – March 9** – **Guest speaker:** Kamran Bhatti

**Week 11 – March 16** – cybervigilantism

**Week 12 – March 23** – **Guest speaker:** Can. Security Intelligence Services

**Week 13 – March 30** – **Guest speaker:** Phil Gurski

**Week 14 – April 6** – Course wrap up

## Relevant Policies

### A Note on Plagiarism:

Students must write their assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major scholastic offence (the Scholastic Offence Policy can be viewed in the Western Academic Calendar).

### Plagiarism Checking:

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for 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. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com ([www.turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com)).

### Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness

Western's policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness can be found at [www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation:

[http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation. Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### Scholastic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following web site:

[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### Mental Health

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western ([http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/index.html](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/index.html)) for a complete list of options how to obtain help.