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Teaching (Something About) Terrorism: Ethical and Methodological Problems, Pedagogical Suggestions

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This article is an attempt to assess what a stimulating and serious course on terrorism should and should not be. The article is divided into three sections. The first examines the profusion of academic literature on terrorism, particularly with regard to providing students with the tools to separate the wheat from the chaff. At the heart of this section is a call to return to the literature on political violence and collective action in order to more effectively ascertain the intellectual, social, environmental, and cognitive mechanisms that lead people to rebel and act violently. The second section explores how nonacademic literature or nontraditional teaching materials can usefully supplement the literature mentioned above and, particularly, in preparing students to engage with primary sources. The final section outlines how and why role-playing can be used. The authors conclude that teaching terrorism should be a matter of cross-disciplinary fertilization in order to reduce the uncertainty created by the word terrorism, which overshadows current practice and precludes proper attention being paid to the social, political, and psychological mechanisms of political violence.

Keywords: teaching, methodology, terrorism, political violence, novels, films, role-playing

Teaching Violence At (Reasonable) Distance

In the last decade, in every Western country, courses on "terrorism" have spread like mushrooms after the rain. Teaching terrorism is challenging for both methodological and ethical reasons, raising issues of objectivity and definition, of access to primary sources (and primary actors), as well as problems of fear, emotion, and everyday assumptions about violence fed in large part by popular culture (Chesnais 1981; Feldman 1991; Douglass and Zulaika 1996). Students and researchers alike are faced with an unprecedented number of publications available on the market (Silke 2001, 2008; Ross 2004; Ranstorp 2007; Jackson, Breen Smyth, and Gunning 2009; Jarvis 2009; Zulaika 2009; Gordon 2010; Young and Findley 2011). However, the growing demand for and popularity of such courses means that these demanding issues cannot be ignored by teachers of politics (Newman 2008). Every student who wants to get acquainted with the subject area or acquire more advanced and critical knowledge also faces these challenges.

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Terrorism is obviously a polemical topic that makes discussion and research difficult (Lopez, 1979; Bigo and Hermant 1984; Guelke 1998); in the context of the war on terrorism, even more so (Bird and Brandt 2002; Gerstmannn et al. 2006). Counter-terrorism legislation combined with fears of radicalization at universities has resulted in the curtailment of academic freedoms and has seen some scholars step away from teaching courses on terrorism entirely (Quilliam Foundation 2010; Sabir 2010). At this time then, a conversation about how to teach this complex and crucial subject is vital.

So, how to teach something about terrorism? It has become commonplace to start academic investigations into terrorism by first acknowledging that terrorism as a concept is both ambiguous and contentious (Tilly 2004; Levi 2008; Dexter 2011). How therefore to avoid the definitional morass and the evaluative traps set by the connotations of the word "terrorist," particularly when acts of violence and terror are given immediate proximity to everyday life by mass and online media (Garland 2001; Altheide 2002; Collins 2004)? How to move students away from the spectacular and the speculative toward more politically relevant and serious concerns? Each new attack does not necessarily increase our knowledge of terrorism, instead often further amplifying easy comments and ordinary views of violence (Bigo and Guittet 2005). These problems complicate debates rather than simplify them, putting the problem of victims' experience in space between trauma and deceptiveness. Similarly, these issues often ambush teachers of politics, trapping them between a widely shared simultaneous and paradoxical repulsion and fascination for terrorism, its discourses, actions, actors and organizations (Wieviorka 1993; Douglass and Zulaika 1996; Baudrillard 2002) and a global oversimplified political rhetoric on terrorism, its causes, dangers, and meanings (Jackson 2005; Gupta 2008; Huysmans and Tsoukala 2008; Aradau and Van Munster 2009; Bigo, Bonelli and Deltombe 2009). The relationship between imaginaries, categories and practices is further complicated by the fact that they are inherently positioned in social spaces and imposed upon us (Bourdieu 1994). These tensions and their immanent social, political, moral, and logical complexities certainly expand the gap between what a lecturer hopes to achieve in a course and what students expect to learn about terrorism.

However, these difficulties are not a good enough reason to stop. Based on the core idea that the role of the teacher in politics is to develop critical minds, the present article is an attempt to assess what a stimulating and serious course on terrorism should and should not be. We start from the premise that the role of a university teacher is not to simply impart knowledge to students but rather to produce learning environments where students can develop the skills and ethos of critical thinking (Passmore 1975). As Benesch argues, "critical thinking is not simply higher order thinking. Instead it is a search for the social, historical and political roots of conventional knowledge and an orientation to transform learning and society (Benesch 1993)." Our approach to the subject matter in question is based on a critical engagement with terrorism that begins by questioning rather than accepting terrorism as an ontologically stable phenomenon (Breen Smyth 2007; Gunning 2007; Jackson 2007). As such, we argue that "terrorism" be considered within the context of political violence *per se* rather than automatically delineating it from other forms of political violence. Our paper emphasizes the necessity to analyze what is overshadowed by the power of the word "terrorism" (Tilly 2004), to get back to the literature on political violence, and theories of collective action, as well as to point as closely as possible to the intellectual, environmental, and cognitive mechanisms that lead people alone or in groups to rebel and act violently against something or someone in a particular political context (Della Porta 1995; Tilly 2003). It also suggests that teaching terrorism's core purpose is to provide students with the elements and tools to understand and to discuss the historical, social, intellectual, and political

contexts that shape organization's strategic choices (Crenshaw [1995], 2007), their ideological and organizational resources as well as the actors' backgrounds, values, and motivations (Gambetta 2005; Beck 2008). Furthermore, such a course should usefully seek to provide insights into the lived experiences of clandestine organization and the consequences for those involved (Della Porta 1992a,b; Guittet, 2011; Linhardt 2006). This article outlines the necessity of eschewing any attempt to produce an "enclyclopedic," hyperbolic teaching practice (everything you wanted to know about), as well as the dangers of falling into alarmist terrorism–related teaching, which would irresponsibly play on fears, rather than analyzing them.

Teaching something critical—and therefore useful—about terrorism requires us to properly address the question of distance. To understand our world, it is necessary to find a balance between being so close to the object that our vision is warped by familiarity or so far from it that the distance becomes distorting (Ginzburg 1998). It is therefore necessary to stand at a reasonable distance from violence (in both terms of space and coldness), focusing on the sociopolitical sequences of action and contexts in which violence is embedded and to reintroduce perspective about the all-pervading unpredictability which one encounters the moment one approaches the realm of violence (Arendt 1969; Tilly 2003; Shapiro and Bedi 2007). The over-riding theme is that there is no single, easy solution, focusing instead on reintroducing the distance, uncertainty, complexity, and ignorance of violence and its often unforeseen nature, its discourses, actors, actions, and representations of such.

The article is divided into three sections. The first examines the profusion of academic literature on terrorism, particularly with regard to providing students with the tools to separate the wheat from the chaff, arguing that a huge percentage of this literature is inadequate, objectionable, tautological, and self-referential. At the heart of this section is a call to return to the "core/essential" literature on political violence and collective action in order to more effectively ascertain the intellectual, social, environmental, and cognitive mechanisms that lead people to rebel and act violently. This approach focuses on the sociopolitical sequences of such acts and the contexts in which violence is embedded and from which it springs. The second section explores how "nonacademic" literature or nontraditional teaching materials such as novels and films can usefully supplement the academic and traditional literature mentioned above and, particularly, in preparing students to engage with primary sources such as communiqués, press releases, and memoires of former members of violent underground organizations. The final section outlines how and why games and role-playing can—and should—be used to underline the forms and the relevance of ritualized physical/symbolic gathering, shared realities, interpersonal relationships, attitude alignment, and competition for leadership within clandestine groups. The pedagogical suggestions presented in conclusion have been developed over many years, in different universities, in different countries and benefit from the input of students.

Assessing the Literature

The last decade has seen the field of terrorism studies become increasingly crowded. It now draws academics and practitioners from a vast array of disciplines and political perspectives. This explosion of diversified interest in terrorism is arguably a mixed blessing. Although the field could be seen now as enormously rich and diverse, there is a danger of it becoming ill-defined, unfocused, and uninteresting, as writers struggle to find new things to say about the subject. "Terrorism studies" is certainly one of the fastest expanding areas of publication in Britain, along with books and articles dedicated to wine and cooking. If the expansion of

cookbooks sounds like an unambiguous blessing for British culture, the incredible profusion and diversification of terrorism literature is of greater concern.

Each "terrorist" attack opens the path to new publications by political actors, often heavily involved in the events and/or who want to justify themselves or use tragedy for political purpose. Any form of aggression opens the doors to pseudo-journalists exploiting victims' fate, disturbing pictures, playing with excessively sentimental narrative, or jumping all-too-easily on the bandwagon of conspiracy theory and other fallacious analysis. Every violent attack releases its batch of the so-called "anti-terrorism" experts with whom it is always difficult to unscramble their supposedly specialized, classified, or privileged information from a more lucrative private business of security or from the agenda of the politically driven think tank that they are often part of (George 1991; Crace 2008; Miller and Mills 2009). If one considers the academic Anglophone publications on terrorism and terrorism-related issues, released since the 1970s, the list of articles and books available is huge (Silke 2009). It is beyond expectation that even experienced and dedicated researchers could keep themselves up-to-date on this literature. It would be therefore unrealistic to pretend that students in politics, relative rookies in the field of terrorism studies can adequately navigate this endless succession of new books and articles published every year and master its structures, contents, and values. Among this vast literature, which books and articles should be in a course guide? Recent publications heavily suggested by publishers? The most well-known or obscure ones?

If the number of publications available is certainly a concern for teaching, the quality is also an important question to address. The question of definition, or what is too loosely called that, has been and still is the subject of controversy, beyond its actual value. Nearly every book begun with a new version of the same part of the controversy concerned with the difficulties that bedevil any attempt to provide an analytical definition of "terrorism." Much of this literature illustrates both the construction and the effects of a reified view on terrorism, offering naturalistic generalizations about supposed past, present, and future trends of terrorism rather than specific, enquiring elements based on original and well-grounded research. Schmid and Jongman noted that "there are probably few areas in the social science literature on which so much is written on the basis of so little research." They estimated that "as much as 80 percent of the literature is not research-based in any rigorous sense; instead, it is too often narrative, condemnatory, and prescriptive" (Schmid et al. 1988: 179). This analysis still holds true today, accurately describing many of the new books and articles published in the last decade. Such publications often have a gaping lack of first-hand contact with violence, its actors, and actions themselves and instead tend to use and re-use the same secondary sources, recycling biased data, building argument on the same preconceived notions, and quoting the same works (Gordon 1999; Reid and Chen 2006). The available literature is largely characterized by theoretical speculation based on subjective interpretation of anecdotal second-hand observations, perpetuating "received views on terrorism" (Brannan, Esler, and Strindberg 2001). Unfortunately, very few researchers actually came across with original primary sources and even less with primary actors (Wieviorka 1993; Della Porta 1995; Post, Sprinzak, and Denny 2003; Stern 2003; Reinares 2004; Khosrokhavar 2005; Horgan 2008). There are of course important questions about to what primary research into political violence can and cannot achieve. Primary research does not bring with it *de facto* legitimacy missing from secondary sources. However these methodological questions should be addressed rather than sidestepped.

By nature, and as a result of the uncongenial, unclear dimensions of any form of violence, terrorism provokes a lot of publications in which past events play for present political implications. It produces a "scholarship of combat" (Kalyvas, 2006) by authors who explicitly or implicitly take sides and see their work as one

of condemnation or justification. Too many writers have been—and continue to be—inclined to swallow too readily unambiguous, neatly scripted stories, whether these documents have been produced by clandestine organizations, supporters, or state bodies. When it is time to talk about terrorism, to analyze its forms and actors, to put it in context, and to record its deadly effects, most of the publications imprudently fail to maintain critical distance in dealing with testimonies taken out of context, biased information, or information obeying some particular logics of production and dissemination.

Classified information is rarely substantial, and it hardly ever adds valuable information to an argument, except if we consider the social and organizational logics of secret that it indubitably carries with itself (Dewerpe 1994). The search for a single consistent depiction of the nature and objectives of "armed struggle," even limiting one's "data" to the productions of one reasonably articulate activist under trial is a hopeless task. Which account of motivations or determining influence is "really true" (Zemon Davis 1987; Ginzburg 1992)? Using judicial archives, notes from a trial, and criminal records cannot go without a serious examination of the credibility or partiality of the sources used (Veyne 1971; Chartier 1988). Judicial archives—like any other archives—are cultural artifacts. Can we really work on violence without thinking about the State mindsets and practices that transcend the confines, practices and discourses of antiterrorism? Is it even possible to produce a comment on a violent situation without meeting every protagonist of the story (Guittet 2010).

It is certainly more quiet and reassuring to prefer the very comfortable position of studying a Law, the analysis of the rhetorical dimension of a political discourse, and the glittering or imposing facades of the "corridors of power" rather than traveling to countries or areas where the security/personal safety situation is at least uncertain and often downright dangerous. Nonetheless, even if qualitative research in this manner may get the researcher closer to her topic, it does not dispense with the serious ethical issues and dilemmas that the researcher must engage with, as well as the value of data collected in chaotic or risky circumstances (Lee 1995; Amiraux and Cefai 2002). Inescapably, the academic literature available on terrorism also suffers from the ordinary biases of research, whether qualitative or quantitative (Silke 2004; Guittet 2006; Ranstorp 2007).

However, the question remains: how to teach students how to separate the wheat from the chaff? Considering that students need to cope with a large quantity of reading in a limited amount of time, it is of paramount importance to enhance their critical reading skills. To help students assess the huge and imposing body of literature is to help students to distinguish between "facts" and writers' opinions, to understand when an account is sweeping or partial, and to make links between what is "known" and what is being speculated. Students therefore need to develop critical and lateral thinking skills, to be in charge and in control of their reading by evaluating it—testing and accepting some assertions, rejecting or modifying others—and to create a (flexible) framework from within which to do this. In the following sections, we expose two practical, visual, and interactive methods to make students aware of the necessity to read and to explore critically the literature available: the terrorism scroll and the trash paradigm.

The Terrorism Scroll

To physically illustrate the vast and continuously growing literature on the subject of terrorism for students, we constructed a scroll of references to books and articles derived primarily from the catalogs of the Library of Congress, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the British Library. While unwinding the 121-meter-length scroll of references into the classroom, we usually suggest one of Umberto Eco's famous sentences; "books are not made to be believed, but to be

subjected to enquiry" (Eco 1980). This invitation to maintain a certain distance to the object is also an invitation to adopt an analytical and critical sociological perspective on every publication. Analytical in the sense that it is about teaching how to dissect the different parts of the argument exposed in the book or article and examine how they operationalize, circumvent, or contradict each other. It is critical in the sense of teaching how to challenge each and every aspect of the argument, identify the weakness and focus on the accuracy and reliability of the primary and secondary sources used, and how they are deployed. For instance, while considering the publications on the Basque country and ETA, students usually understand quite well that studying this part of the world without reading Basque, Spanish, and French is certainly a significant obstacle to producing high-quality research based on the idea that informed knowledge means unavoidably cross-examination of different points of view and different types of sources written in different languages. The point being made is not to say that it is impossible to publish an argument on ETA, the Basque country, and Basque nationalism without speaking Basque, but to highlight that, it goes with one of the most usual and ordinary bias of research, that is, incomplete point of view and therefore potential misreading of a situation. To return to the scroll, this is used as an elimination technique—if you cannot read the source and do not have time to learn the language necessary to do so, then the text can be eliminated from your enquiries—however unfortunate this is. As one goes along with other questions, looking perhaps at the credibility of the author or the piece (which is in itself problematic), the age of the research, the academic references and primary sources used, and other criteria, the scroll is wound up, literally reducing the length of the reading list. This offers many alternative ways of navigating the maze of publications available. The point is not to offer a list of 100 books and articles to be read, but rather to show that, on one hand, an analysis of this huge and somewhat fearsome literature is possible and that, on the other hand, a lot of work has to be done to achieve a closer view of violence, its mechanisms, patterns, actors, and powerful representations.

The Trash Paradigm

Few scholars would dispute that the entrenched representations, interpretations, and classifications that underpin the discursive practices of academia have a powerful influence on the way in which they ask and answer questions. Often, taking a step to the side and avoiding the classical or well-trodden paths offers greater intellectual possibility to explore a topic. While in every classroom, one may find a litter bin (usually full of trash and other junk foods), and this ordinary object is somewhat helpful in order to demonstrate that point; in order to study terrorism, there is no choice but to confront unpleasant violent situations and highly committed often fierce or frightening people. However, we should not shirk from this—in the same way that the archeologist William Rathje refused to in the 1970s when inquiring into American food manners: to plunge deep into the world of garbage and to surface with revealing information and insights about the society (Rathje 1984, 1992). What we may consider as his main discovery is that by studying what people have thrown away, archeologists (and nutritionists) can learn a great deal about a society. It means that the peculiar perfume of garbage, of dirty things is a good smell for who really want to understand how a society works. His field-changing intervention in archeology highlights perfectly the epistemological necessity to reintroduce what have been consistently denied or ignored: uncertainty, distance, and doubts lie at the core of the research on violence. The content of the litter bin, exposed on the ground of a classroom, does not give us a complete view of the realities of consumption but does provide a glimpse into what we may be able to know and that which is too often ignored.

To put it differently, even though they are imperfect, such innovative and grounded research, biographical analysis, sociological and historical analysis of repression, resistance, mobilization, contentious, and contestable and contested politics offer new tools to political researchers and work as a set of techniques aimed at the recovery of remains and traces. Critically embracing such approaches can help us to address our basic ignorance of the mechanisms of violence and gain insights into the mechanisms and maneuverings taking place behind the scenes, before the explosion (Guittet, 2011).

Facing Ignorance

As we suggested previously, classic readings on terrorism are far from entirely satisfactory in our quest to better understand political violence. It does not mean that one should not read them or teach them, but the very first lesson to be taught is the essential academic cautiousness, the virtue of prudence: never take a conclusion for granted and always question with great sociological care the position of the author and the sources used. It is of paramount importance to enlist nonacademic "literature" and primary sources in order to foster students' understanding of the difficult and gray areas of terrorism studies. In this section, we suggest that certain fictions can better provide heightened consciousness and awareness of political processes, events and realities than a reliance on most of the typical textbooks can. We also suggest that in order to address our ignorance of numerous mechanisms and dimensions of violence, fiction "texts" from across the spectrum of cultural production not only provide some insights into the scale and complexities of terrorism across a sweeping landscape of time, geography, action, and motive, but also make students aware of the difficulties in dealing with primary sources. Without sociological imagination (Mills 1959), there could be no knowledge, and political fictions can be of a prevailing interest for the study of violence (Bleiker 2003).

When talking about political "fictions" we refer to novels, short stories, plays, movies, or parts thereof, where political processes and political views are reasonably close to the surface. From a purely historical and educational point of view, teaching political sciences with popular fictions is not new (Davidson 1961; Neuse 1980). However, in recent times, there have been many noble efforts to enlist literature and movies in the quest for political understanding (Lieberfeld 2007). In recent years, fictions like movies and novels have enlisted by scholars, reflecting the cultural and esthetic turns in politics and beyond. One notable example is the study of highly politically engaged novelists during the Cold War to explore whether—and what—they can tell us about the period (Caute 2009), especially in constructing enemies and threats and images of such, in the service of a particular politics (Fiebig-von Hase and Lehmkuhl 1997). In another very interesting study, Aaron Kelly shows how, in the context of "The Troubles" in Northern Ireland, fictions of political violence may have played a role in the making/unmaking and the masking/unmasking of the culture of political violence (Kelly 2005; see also Pelaschiar 1998). In 2008, a team from the London School of Economics and the University of Manchester produced a report exploring the use of fiction in development studies (Lewis, Rogers, and Woolcock 2008). They argued that the distinction between fiction and the social sciences was not as fixed as one might assume and suggested that the scope of what is considered valid knowledge be widened. The point here was not that fiction could replace academic research but rather that they complemented each other: "In this way, literary accounts can be seen—alongside other forms—as an important, accessible and useful way of understanding values and ideas in society" (Lewis et al. 2008: 10).

It is even more important to rely on works of fiction when it is time to teach the influence of social representation of political issue (Antonello and O'Leary

2009). In a rich and thorough analysis of 1081 contemporary English-language novels, Robert Appelbaum and Alexis Paknadel offer a very challenging view on what has modern fiction done with terrorism and how these novels contribute to understanding images and representations of terrorism: "all terrorism fiction, literary or popular, is itself a part of culture in the widest sense of the term—a part of how modern society generates and circulates social and symbolic meaning—and it is inevitably imbricated in the mythographies of the culture at large, which circulate their meanings by way of a large number of media, from talk radio and film to news magazines and, alas, other fiction" (Appelbaum and Paknadel 2008: 401).

Novels: Lighting The Labyrinth

With regard to both form and content, fictions are both sources of entertainment and valuable political tools. Fictions always come with inherent dramatic effect (Foertsch, 2004), loaded with emotional baggage and liberated from academic conventions but not from their social, political, and historical backgrounds. What we suggest here is to enlist novels when teaching difficult aspects of the dynamics of violence which are beyond the traditional boundaries of the discipline of politics, in order to supply some vicarious experience where real experience is (nearly) impossible to apprehend. Those who have conducted interviews with members (and former members) of a clandestine organization—whether deeply violent or less—will be able to tell how the most nerve-racking aspect of their underground lives is (was) security—broadly understood—and how the details of daily life become the focus of a hallucinatory succession of suspicions and concerns. Those who have conducted interviews with people who have killed will be able to transliterate the logics and dynamics of the dehumanization of victims as well as processes of denial.

However, the question is "how to teach properly with such materials?" How to explain what the "rules," habits and norms of clandestine security mean and how they shape the individuals' logics of action? How can we teach the momentum of the first shot, the entry into the killing zone, and its effects on individuals as well as group dynamics, cohesion, and fragmentation? It also must be concerned with examining how people respond emotionally to the experience of killing. Beyond the boundaries of politics, history (Bourke 2000), sociology (Passy and Giugni 2000), criminology, psychology, and socio-psychology (Bandura, Underwood, and Fromson 1975; Shaw 1981; Mackie 1986; Post 1986; Brown 1999; Morselli 2005; Forsyth 2006) are disciplines where these questions have been tackled. Approached with the same critical eye as any academic source fictions work as accessible, enjoyable yet not trivial introductions to potentially obscure and difficult works.

For example, we may consider Cesare Battisti's textual world, which is dominated by broken lives, estrangement, shady deals, violence, betrayal, and the absence of innocence and morality. This is a fiction that offers no escape, only relentless movement (Battisti 1993, 1995, 1998; Battisti and Korkos 2003). Massimo Carlotto, William Boyd, and Bernardo Atxaga for instance describe in compelling detail the stress of being on the run, the temporary nature of existence and the various techniques employed in order to blend in with "the population" (Atxaga, [1993] 1997); Carlotto 2006a, 2006b 2007; Boyd 2009;. One of Bernard Schlinck's last novels, "Das Wochenende," offers a perceptive and intimate view of a former member of the Rote Armee Fraktion (*Red Army Faction*) going back to "ordinary life," for a weekend, in a secluded country home after a decade in jail, thus asking what "retirement" means for a "terrorist" (Schlinck, [2008] 2010)? In Ismaël Kadaré's novels, the most undisguised violence coexists with demobilizing meekness, absurdity with tragedy. Every novel from Kadaré is

almost a disconcerting, disturbing anthropological account of violence, revenge, and powerful necromantic memory. In his work, violence is always momentary but often shocking (Kadaré 1963; Kadaré 1970, 1978). In the novel *Blindness*, José Saramago explores the escalation of violence and shows worlds of latent cruelty and the banality of "evil" (Saramago 1995).

Such an approach is not concerned with transforming students of Politics into literature reviewers but rather to accept the idea that (good) novelists are legitimate observers of politics and experience—in the sense of taking facts, (re) combining and evaluating them and conveying feelings of identification, atomization, or abjection. Novels can provide a heightened awareness and understanding of political phenomena and realities of violence and can be utilized as teaching aids for the study of terrorism. Even better, in her terrific novel *Imaginary Friends* (a tale of two sociology professors' attempts at fieldwork), A. Lurie skillfully explores and goes beyond the classical sociological participant–observer point of view (Lurie 1967). Lurie offers readers a coherent and entertaining critique of the problem of qualitative research that could be just as easily applied to terrorism studies as sociology. Lurie's approach asks how a situation of violence can affect and change those who study it, just as researchers can change the situation they study. Fictions both literary and film are also important pedagogical tools for promoting critical analysis by considering the politics of knowledge. Exploring storytelling and narrative function in fictions can also help students to appreciate the extent to which academic theories are themselves a form of storytelling (Lewis et al. 2008). As Weber concluded from her experience of teaching IR theory with film: "In this way students become *active* critical interpreters and indeed writers of their worlds rather than passive recipients of these worlds and of the truths that construct them" (Weber, 2002a: 286).

On Display: Appearance, Fantasy and Ordinary Violence

Terrorism has long been a fertile ground for exposition and exploitation by filmmakers and many Hollywood movies make use of the glamor and excitement of violence as a marketing strategy. Terrorists, whoever they are, wherever they come from are credible villains and, since the 1980s, have become a particular popular generic enemy. "Terrorism has become a vital source of narratives, fantasies, and myths that contribute so much to highly entertaining cinema, with its international intrigue, exotic settings, graphic violence, and the putative conflict between good and evil" (Boggs and Pollard 2006: 335). Bringing movies into a classroom is usually perceived by students as a potentially enjoyable moment and mode of learning (Simpson and Kaussler 2009). Using cinematographic images in a politics course is certainly refreshing for the teacher as well. Every movie featuring a terrorist plot is a potential subject to be used in order to challenge commonsense visions of violence, to follow the historical evolution of how villains are portrayed (Boggs and Pollard 2006), how the terrorist threat is described, and, above all, to teach the linkages between popular culture and politics—whether domestic or international (Weldes 1999, 2003; Weber 2002a,b). In her particularly insightful article on the TV series *24*, Elspeth Van Veeren, admirably shows how fiction and reality are blurring into a "hyper-reality" (Baudrillard 1981) where truth, fantasy, and meaning are mutually constitutive in the production of plausible and widely accepted views of terrorism, counter-terrorism, whether past, present, or future (Van Veeren 2009).

Analyzing the cinematographic representation of terrorism in the last four decades would require a course in itself, and it is beyond the scope of the present article. Over the last decade of teaching experiences in different universities, we have used somewhere close to 30 classical terrorist movies in order to supplement our curricula such as *La bataille d'Alger* (1965) directed by Gillo

Pontecorvo, *La Chinoise* (1968) by Jean-Luc Godard, *Black Sunday* (1976) by John Frankenheimer, *Die Bleirne Zeit* (1981) directed by Margarethe von Trotta, *La Muerte de Mikel* (1983) by Imanol Uribe, *Die Hard* (1988) directed by John McTiernan, *Air force One* (1997) directed by Wolfgang Petersen, *Bloody Sunday* (2002) by Paul Greengrass, and *Der Baader Meinhof Komplex* (2008) directed by Uli Edel, to quote only a few. What we suggest here in this article is to explore and to make the most of other films, not necessarily viewed as "terrorism movies" *per se* but that play with the esthetics of ambiguity toward the social dimensions and psychodynamic patterns of violence, offering some insightful but disturbing elements of thought rather than mere representations. Most political thrillers opt for melodramatic darkness as a classical code to display violence. *In Cold Blood* (1967), directed by Richard Brooks and based on Truman Capote's novel, unravels the terrifying but ordinary logic of the slaughterer: "*I thought he was a very nice gentleman....I thought so right up to the moment I cut his throat.*" Sanchez-Cazbezudo's movie *La noche de los girasoles* [the night of the Sunflowers] (2008), is a spectacularly un-melodramatic thriller in which the story is told in nonlinear way, with overlapping fragments, each one offering a different perspective on events and therefore playing with the audience's equivocation to the violence on display. Ken Loach's *Hidden Agenda* (1990) is a chilling movie precisely because of the bright and ordinary atmosphere it creates, with terrorism, clandestine plots, and violence played out in the cold and normal light of day on the Belfast streets. Sam Peckinpah's 1971 controversial *Straw Dogs* is another disturbing movie; how violence can errupt from a simple, regular, and honest professor of mathematics? Peckinpah implies that every man (sic) has a breaking point, foregrounding the interpersonal, intersubjective nature of radicalization. On another aspect, movies like *Calle Santa Fé* (2007) or *Romanzo Criminale* (2005) offer perceptive views of underground life and exile, of the triviality of violence, and of the porosity of criminal and politically driven underground groups. *Prima della rivoluzione* (1964), *Il sosia* (1968), and *La strategia del ragno* (1970) directed by Bernardo Bertolucci are ostensibly quite opaque, art house movies but can also be seen as clinical and precise dissections of a volatile and violent era. The exceptional movies of Nanni Moretti, *Io sono un autarchico* (1976) and *Ecce bombo* (1978), are humorous, but deep chronicles of the Italian ultra Left's disenchantment in the 1970s—*l'ingranaggio della violancia*. The 1994 drama film "*Death and the Maiden*" directed by Polanski and based on Ariel Dorfman's play could have been a backdrop for a horror movie, but it offers more a harrowing experience of the power of memory and a tragedy in the most persuasive Aristotelian sense. A fiction is a helpful pedagogical tool to enhance the understanding of a situation, a particular context but cannot be a substitute for reading texts. Fiction does not provide verification, but as a source of powerful framing, it is inseparable from the basic comparative method to which social scientists inevitably turn and as such can be productively engaged in efforts to comprehend social complexities that lie beyond exact verification. Fiction is an accommodating educational instrument—flexible supplements to, but not substitutes for, confrontation with classical academic literature and, above all, primary sources.

Nonetheless, turning to fictions is useful—and necessary—from an educational point of view before facing primary sources. It enhances students' curiosity and makes them realize how a political context and a particular situation are important in understanding a communiqué, a speech, a leaflet, and other document produced by a clandestine organization. It may also give students a better indication of the value of more carefully analyzing formal properties—medium, size, appearance, and length—the logics of production of these documents—discussed, thought, and written in secrecy—and the audience they are seeking—outside the organization or within—before rushing to the analysis of the typical narratives and grammar generally employed—on the enemy(ies), the

justifications of the fight and the glory of the past, present, and future fighters for the cause (Guittet 2012). Every clandestine organization, whatever its degree of violence, produces a huge variety of documents. Whether we are speaking of the *Rote Armee Fraktion* (Rote Armee Frakation 1997) or Islamic radical *milieu* evolving around and nearby *Al Qaeda* (Kepel and Milelli 2008), to take some well-known examples, numerous efforts of compilation of their texts have already been made. Testimonies and other autobiographical documents of members and/or former members of a clandestine organization are also of great interest in terms of both, research and teaching (Jünschke 1988; Della Porta 1992b).

Playing the Game

One of the most common difficulties obstructing the successful critical teaching of the nature of violence is, paradoxically, the peaceful space of the classroom and the secured time of the lecture. Is there a place for experimentation, psychodrama, or sociodrama in a course on terrorism? In this section, we would like to reflect on the use and misuse of games, role-playing, and simulations in a course on terrorism to foster and support students' critical understanding of violence and encouraging them to engage with "the ambiguous nature of a partially ordered world" (Boggs, Mickel, and Holton 2007: 833). As we suggest previously, to study is not to observe and categorize but to push students to explore, investigate, and interrogate their own knowledge and position. As rewarding as lectures and discussion sessions may be, we suggest here that a topic as complex and multivocal as terrorism requires a move away from knowledge-transfer learning techniques to student-driven and interactive approaches. Drawing on the work of Boud and Pascoe (1978), Boggs et al. (2007) suggest that experimental learning has the following characteristics: Each student is involved, the learning activity corresponds in some way to the world outside the classroom, and the learner has control over her or his learning experience. Incorporating the arts (including role-play and gaming) into the classroom lends itself to experimental learning. "Art draws people into and envelops them in the world created by the work" (Boggs et al. 2007: 834). Art can "enhance imagination, present multiple perspectives and enlarge personal interpretation; it nurtures capabilities that can open new solutions and opportunities for action" (Eisner 1992; Boggs et al. 2007: 833).

Teaching such scenarios and simulation games needs to be handled with great care and informed by a great appreciation of the size and limits of the audience and the domestic political context. While there are, of course, possible ethical problems involved in attempting to make the students "play with fire," we discuss the educational benefits of one game (the *Machiavelli's chessboard* or *Djambi*) and one classical simulation (*Mafia* or *Assassin* or *Werewolf*) that we have used over the past years with a certain success. After playing theses games and simulations, students find it easier to connect their own experiences with a set of literature beyond the scope of conventional politics and therefore learn more than expected at first glance.

Fictional World and Simulated Workplace

Simulations model intricate political processes or realities and place participants in an assigned role in a specific situation. By nature, simulation, game, and role-playing offer a safe setting in which mistakes are not costly and participants usually never die from such experiences. Role-playing is all about learning through acting (Cohen et al. 2005; Tessman 2006). There is now a growing literature on the pedagogical theory behind the use of simulation as a teaching tool (Dyer and Schumann 1993; Gopinah and Sawyer 1999; Brown 2000; Cleave-Hogg and

Morgan 2002; McGlinn 2003). By encouraging students to take an active role in their own learning, we can stimulate student engagement and enhance comprehension, as Fox and Ronkowski argue (Fox and Ronkowski 1997). As well as being entertaining, there is now much evidence to suggest that such approaches produce excellent educational benefits. Self-directed, active learning results in a depth of understanding and knowledge retention not reached by traditional methods (Smith and Boyer 1996).

Despite the evolving interest for games and simulations in IR, role-playing tends to be exclusively utilized in the areas of conflict negotiations, diplomacy, crisis decision making, or the politics of the Middle East (Kaufman 1998; Dougherty 2003; Asal 2005; Wheeler 2006; Belloni 2008). Traditionally, simulation involves the study of interactions between autonomous, rational individuals. Students are given a defined role and a clear set of objectives. Simulations and game playing can however be used to promote critical thinking. This involves creativity, flexibility, self-reflection, imagination, and interpretation by both student and teacher. When teaching terrorism, we believe the seminal question to be explored through the use of role-play and simulation concerns the initiating factors and catalysts that may lead to engagement in violent activity and to invite the students to engage with these influential first momentums of violence. Role-playing can and should be used more often to simulate situations in a realistic, yet open manner, underlining the forms and the relevance of ritualized physical/symbolic gathering, shared realities, interpersonal relationships, attitude alignment, competition for the leadership (Hogg and Abrams 1993), the concepts of political opportunity, escalation of violence, cycles of protest, and clandestinity. Simulations are supported by the use of primary documents, novels, and films as discussed above, so as to develop the sociological imagination necessary to engage successfully in this activity. In addition to any simulation, we encourage teachers to ask some key actors (like former members of a clandestine organization, police, and intelligence officers) to participate in the making of the debriefing for students about their roles. The results of the simulation are compared with autobiographical materials from former members of underground armed groups as well as being used to critically assess the current literature on radicalization. The experience helps students develop an argument on how influential peer pressure can be within any relatively small and closed groups, and how the scope of rational choice within such an organization is strongly limited by the nature of clandestinity itself (Della Porta 1995; Morselli 2005).

It is Not Something You Ask Someone to Think About

There is then nothing particularly innovative about bringing simulation into the classroom (Vincent and Shepherd 1998). However, role-play does become somewhat more difficult when sensitive subjects are being discussed. Perhaps more worryingly for our subject matter Boggs et al. suggest that, “it is of questionable ethics to ask a student to play the bad-guy—the despicable sexual harassment perpetrator or ugly racist” (Boggs et al., o. cit.: 835). What about asking a student to play a terrorist? Recent controversy has been caused by a young Australian teacher who set her class of Year Ten students in Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community High School in the state of Western Australia an assignment to plan a terrorist attack (Guardian.co.uk 2010; The Independent 2010). The assignment asked the students to make a political statement by carrying out a biological or chemical attack on the Australian public. The instructions stated: “Your goal is to kill the MOST innocent civilians in order to get your message across.” The school principal withdrew the assignment as soon as it came to his attention. He is reported as having told the State Education Department, “The teacher, who is

relatively inexperienced, made a well-intentioned but misguided attempt to engage the students in an assignment on contemporary conflict and how beliefs and values influence the behaviors and motives of individuals" (*The Independent* 2010). Australia is an ally [of USA] in the war on terror, and with the 2002 Bali bombing still fresh in the public consciousness, the assignment has predictably provoked mixed opinions from the Australian public as well as making it onto the news in both the UK and United States. Sarah Gilbert, a 15-year-old student from the school in question told the West Australian newspaper she was horrified by the assignment: "I was shocked and quite offended," she said. "I'm offended that it's Australia but I'm disgusted because it doesn't matter where it is, it's still not something you ask someone to do or think about…. There is a difference between being a terrorist and learning about terrorism." Brian Deegan who lost a son in the Bali Bombing told the Press Association that he thought the assignment had some merit as long as the intended aim was to encourage feelings of regret and sympathy for the victims of violence: "If it was intended to teach them about the impact, the effect of terrorism on innocent people and to try and extract sympathy, empathy and regretfulness in the aftermath, then I think that it's a positive move. Anything else and it's plainly stupid" (Guardian.co.uk 2010).

In these accounts, it seems as though asking students to think about the processes by which violent attacks occur is acceptable only when it reinforces dominant narratives about the war on terror by evoking empathy and sympathy for the victims of violence. In our teaching, we go further than this, using simulation and role-play to help students learn by "un-learning" (Rank, [1932], 1989)— to step outside prevailing ideologies and question their own assumptions and beliefs about terrorism. While terrorism as a subject may have uncertainty at its core, it does not mean that in teaching terrorism we should aim to mitigate that uncertainty entirely. Rather, we argue for teaching techniques that can help students incorporate and explore uncertainty and political contingency. Although they may find it scary, it is important to ease students away from the desire to know the "right" answer. As Eisner suggests: "not all problems have single, correct answers … Having fixed objectives and pursuing clear-cut methods for achieving them are not always the most rational way of dealing with the world" (Eisner 1992).

Playing with Fire: Ordinary Games, Subversive Gaming

Among the tools we have used to welcome students inside clandestine and armed organizations' dynamics, the game *Machiavelli's chessboard* and simulation, *Mafia*, known as well as *Assassin* or *Werewolf*, have allowed us not only to challenge common representations of terrorism but also to move beyond the boundaries of politics and offer some insights into group dynamics' analysis. There are similarities and differences between these two games. *Machiavelli's chessboard* or *Djambi* was created in the 1970s; it is a game of subversion, malicious motive, lies, and assassination par excellence (Badaire, Guittet, and Potier 2011). *Mafia* is a game of accusations, lying, bluffing, and assassination invented in the 1980s. In both games, there are no restrictions on speech, secretive actions, or lies. However, *Machiavelli's chessboard* is primarily a game of power based on betrayal, violation of presumptive trust, and treachery.[1] *Mafia* is more a game of group interaction, communication, deduction, and suspicion.[2] In both, players cannot avoid confrontation, killing, and death. If the simplicity of these games is disarming, the educational benefits are vast for teachers in politics.

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[1] Rules of the Machiavelli's chessboard are available at : http://regle.jeuxsoc.fr/djamb_rg.pdf.

[2] Rules for Mafia are available at : http://eblong.com/zarf/werewolf.html.

In *Machiavelli's chessboard*, the objective of the game is to capture the chiefs of the three other players before they capture yours. Although informal alliances can be temporarily agreed upon, there is no team, no friends: Each player plays against the other ones. Each player has access to the same classical political tools: persuasion (Diplomat), scandal (Reporter), activism (Militants), political crime (Assassin), and manipulation (Gravedigger). One of the very interesting and original aspects of that chessboard is that the dead stay on the board, and each player can move them, using the Gravedigger. In Machiavelli's chessboard, commemoration of the dead can either be a protection (memory of the dead works as a defensive wall) or suffocation (a player entirely surrounded by dead is locked and therefore dead). In *Mafia*, there are two kinds of actors: Players are either "Mafiosi" and know each other, or ordinary people ("peasants") who know the number of Mafiosi among them but ignore their identity. Mafia is a battle to death, between an informed minority (Mafiosi) and an uninformed majority (Peasants), played in two phases: During the night, Mafiosi covertly murder a peasant, and during the day, all the surviving players debate the identities of the Mafiosi and vote to eliminate a suspect.

These two games offer several teaching-related dimensions that could be beneficial to a course on terrorism. *Machiavelli's chessboard* is an interesting game to teach strategy while putting the emphasis on the ephemeral art of decision, between speculations and circumstances. In a classical chess game, you might be able to calculate the potential moves of the opponent, whereas in the Machiavelli's one, the number of combinations and sequences of tactical maneuvers is complicated further by the meta-game, the discussions, compromises, and betrayals (Badaire et al. 2011). The entire game is based on and conducts players toward an inevitable escalation of violence, accentuating logics of mimetic rivalry between players. Moreover, the past is never over in the game. Corpses are desacralized in *Machiavelli's chess*. Eternal rest and peace for the dead (materialized by the burial in life or the "removing" from the board in classical chess) or resurrection (disinterment, and heroization in life or "promotion" in chess) is replaced by the negation of the identity of the piece in the Machiavelli's chessboard. Pieces are turned upside down to show that they are "dead," revealing a black unidentified face, and they become the stake for every player. Dead bodies work as a memorial fence, as a consequence and a labyrinth that no one can truly ignore. The battleground in *Machiavelli's chess* is never a smooth and polished environment but a rather shattered, damaged, and puzzled one—a realistic one. Actors involved in a conflict are playing with the dead, around dead bodies but never without. This is the necromantic logic of every conflict, producing cadavers, fighting in the name of dead, and commemorating the new ones (justification, incantation, and remembrance). Mafia, now perhaps more commonly known as Werewolf, is a simple simulation that provides space to explore complex group dynamics. Played over the course of one class, or in real time via email or chat rooms, the simulations involve a group of villagers. Under the cover of night (or with students' eyes closed), two anonymous Mafioso (or werewolves) select a victim who is killed. During the day, villagers must discuss who they believe is the enemy within and kill them in retaliation by nightfall. It is a game of trust and ensnaring where the ability to speak, to defend, or to charge someone are crucial qualities. Mafia is a simple but crucial game that gives an opportunity to detail with great attention the idea that social life without some measure of trust would be impossible. It offers some insights into small group dynamics and their analysis. In the game, every "day," innocent people are deciding on the future of one of them who is (mis)perceived (with reason or not) as an enemy. Social support is normally valuable when people find themselves in threatening circumstances, but the logics of the game is all about intergroup conflict; who is the betrayer, who is the defector? Before they know it, students

are entering into the daily life of a classical generic underground organization where assuring, reinforcing trust, and loyalty are essential. While well played by students, these two games may generate strong emotions (anger for being betrayed or "killed"). Whatever the game or the simulation employed for educational reason, the follow-up discussions are the cornerstone for an accomplished session. Playing these games does not devalue or trivialize violent actions but rather informs students about the ordinariness of some mechanisms that lead to radical behavior.

Teaching Terrorism at The Turning Point

The nature and extent of terrorism remains a deeply contested terrain. The word itself is constraining, any definition suggesting that there is an analytically useful coherence to what is in reality a diverse set of people and activities. In this article, we have briefly critiqued classical terrorism literature and suggested more meaningful ways of teaching something relevant about the complexity, the ambiguity, and uncertainty surrounding the subject. Our aim is to suggest teaching techniques that produce autonomous students with sound academic abilities who have the skills and confidence to understand and challenge knowledge that is taken for granted. Taught well, any course on terrorism could potentially liberate, offering students the opportunity to read, learn, and discuss the supposed evident realities of violence, its actors, discourses, and actions as well as to explore the practicalities and politics of knowledge. Taught badly, a course on terrorism could induce intellectual paralysis. At the core of this article, there is a claim for a particular pedagogical ecosystem where unknown is a blessing *terra incognita* to be discovered, where complexity and nuances are praised over piped, channeled, and repeated mainstream views.

We believe that good university teaching can prove to be a transformative learning experience—both for the students and teachers. We set out a manifesto for cross-fertilization between the disciplines of social research and seek to incorporate alternative and experimental teaching methods utilizing nonacademic materials at the fundamental level. Because terrorism is a controversial topic, it is a remarkable vehicle for teaching a variety of topics relevant to the study of politics and a remarkable vehicle for opening students' minds to other disciplinary fields of research as well as significantly enhancing their critical sense. As such, we tend to deliberately ignore a huge part of the existing literature dedicated to terrorism and offer a necessarily but assumed "incomplete" course: Definitive "answers" are replaced by critical questions, naïve assurance by multivocal interpretation and understanding. Teaching (something about) terrorism is about dismantling the various and difficult obstacles that confront the exercise of critique, to reveal the social and political mechanisms that parcel out the full picture of violence and to refuse the classical disciplinary boundaries when the understanding of terrorism is all about the necessity to move from the comfort zone to the harsh grounded reality of the complexity, the ambiguity, and the unknown.

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