

Record: 1**Title:** The Changed Classroom, Post-September 11.**Authors:** Cox, Ana Marie**Source:** Chronicle of Higher Education. 10/26/2001, Vol. 48 Issue 9, pA16. 3p. 3 Color Photographs.**Document Type:** Article**Subject Terms:** *SEPTEMBER 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001
*STUDY & teaching of terrorism
*ORDER (Philosophy)**Geographic Terms:** UNITED States**Abstract:** Describes the effect of the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001 on the interest of students in terrorism. Increase in enrollment in courses on Islam; Actions taken by faculty members to incorporate educational materials related to the attacks; Engagement of students in efforts to change the sense of order that was destroyed during the attacks.**Full Text Word Count:** 2766**ISSN:** 0009-5982**Accession Number:** 5455703**Database:** Academic Search Complete**Section:** THE FACULTY**THE CHANGED CLASSROOM, POST-SEPTEMBER 11****Professors add to their courses and report that students are more engaged**

In August, at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, Eugene O'Donnell told his classon law-enforcement issues in terrorism that the subject would "require us to go on a far-off trip to exotic places thousands of miles away."

Now he says, "Well, Afghanistan is not as far away as it was before."

The attack on the World Trade Center has shifted more than mental geography for Mr. O'Donnell's class. "We used to be able to say things like the chances of being caught in a terrorist attack are pretty remote, that they're nothing if you compare them to traffic fatalities, that American terrorism fatalities around the globe have never been that high. And you come in one day and suddenly, blocks away, they've blown up 300 stories worth of buildings." To say the least, he concludes, "we're using an out-of-date textbook now."

Because Mr. O'Donnell teaches about terrorism and because he teaches not far from Ground Zero, his situation may seem extraordinary. But it's not: In institutions of all types and sizes, and in a wide variety of disciplines, instructors are struggling with how the events of September 11 have forced them to re-evaluate what they teach and how they teach it.

The attacks have markedly altered student interest in particular subjects, and in some instances have altered the subject matter itself. The attacks have also given many courses a new relevance, and the stunning scale of the tragedy has sparked a new sense of engagement in both students and professors. Constance E. Cook,

director of the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, says several professors have told her "that this has been the best semester of teaching they have ever had. They say students are more interested and more engaged in the subject matter, more eager to learn."

NOT A STATISTICAL GLITCH

Students' interest in topics related to the terrorist attacks has made for overflowing classrooms in Near Eastern-studies departments, and has ratcheted up enrollment in courses on Islam, Arabic, and international relations as well.

Classes in Arabic show the least change, though instructors expect that federal authorities' efforts to recruit Arabic translators will push this language-department backwater into the mainstream. Still, "this is more than a statistical glitch," says Fred Donner, a professor of Near Eastern history at the University of Chicago, where enrollment in elementary Arabic has jumped by about 70 percent.

Students seem even more hungry for classes that deal with the ideas, rather than the words, behind Islamic fundamentalism and behind terrorism. At Princeton University, Wolfgang Franz Danspeckgruber, who teaches a seminar on international diplomacy, saw his class size double after the attacks; he capped it at 130 students.

Stanford University's course on "Palestine, Zionism, and the Arab-Israel Conflict" usually draws 40 students but wound up with 100. At Boston University, 95 students signed a petition in favor of reinstating a class on terrorism.

This surge of interest has generated some practical concerns.

Jean Bethke Elshtain's graduate seminar on "Politics, Ethics, and Terror," at Chicago's Divinity School, has 80 students this year, not the 30 she had expected. She is determined to let them all take the class, she says, although "I don't know how I'm going to grade 80 seminar papers."

A 'LEAP OF IMAGINATION'

The class won't change its focus much from her original intent to study the uses of terror in mid-20th-century totalitarian regimes. The most significant change brought about by the events of September 11, she says, is that "the leap of imagination required to put oneself in those situations is not so great."

Some faculty members have modified their syllabuses specifically to incorporate material related to the attacks. Christopher S. Wren, a professor of communications and public affairs at Princeton, scrapped his original schedule for "Politics and the Media: Covering International Intrigue" and remade it to focus on coverage of the attacks. Professors at Michigan, says Ms. Cook, have led discussions about the attacks in the context of political science, history, and philosophy. Other colleges have devised entirely new courses to keep up with student demand.

At the University of California at Los Angeles, where the fall semester didn't start until early October, faculty members had almost a month to plan special courses related to the events of September 11. They came up with 50.

Brian Copenhaver, provost of the College of Letters and Science at UCLA, says the idea of responding so robustly emerged soon after the attacks, at a meeting of the university's Emergency Management Team. "It usually deals with earthquakes," he notes.

"In an ordinary context, coming to college is a big transition," says Mr. Copenhaver. "What happened created another really powerful transition, especially considering that this was, for most students, really the first major event in the United States that plunged everyone into history at once."

The new courses, he says, make "concrete connections between what we're all living through and what the business of a university is: teaching and learning."

UCLA's seminars are limited to 20 students each and are offered on a pass/no pass basis. They meet only once a week, have a limited reading list, and don't count toward a degree. They are about 90 percent full, which means that almost 1,000 students are taking classes that they don't have to and that they won't get credit for. The instructors, for their part, have forgone any extra compensation for their work, Mr. Copenhaver says.

MACHIAVELLI AND TERRORISM

The explosion of interest goes beyond curiosity about the Middle East or about the motivations of the hijackers. At Chicago, Ms. Elshtain made it clear to her students that her course has only a thematic connection to September 11, but no one dropped out. At UCLA, the new offerings include a class on the literature of colonial Egypt and an examination of the wars in Algeria and the Belgian Congo. Mr. Copenhaver himself is teaching a class on Machiavelli and terrorism.

He agrees that some of the courses "are on the fringes of what various people might regard as not relevant." But making a connection like the one between Machiavelli and Osama bin Laden--however tenuous it may seem at first--is exactly the point, he argues.

"When you encounter a phenomenon as large as war, terror, or violence, you can connect to other parts of the human experience that yesterday or the day before you may not have thought of as relevant," Mr. Copenhaver says. With the new classes, the university hopes to "make connections where they hadn't been apparent before. We don't want students to keep their academic experience in a tight little box."

At Waubensee Community College, in Sugar Grove, Ill., Timothy Dean Draper is trying to make connections as well. Waubensee--where, he says, "I am the history department"--won't be opening 50 new courses. Instead, he and his colleagues have looked for ways to take advantage of the general hunger for context and information that has overtaken their students.

Mr. Draper says his students are more engaged than ever, even in subjects that don't directly answer their questions about September 11. He's seen students develop an "historical empathy" that "gives relevance to the subject that it may not have had before, particularly at a community college, where half your students may be in general education and, before September 11, not have had any particular interest in your field."

DRAWING PARALLELS

He has tried to use that empathy in his six classes--three in American history and three in world history. Mr. Draper says he "carefully" draws parallels between the terrorists and American revolutionaries--"just to get them thinking about where, for one person, patriotism ends and terrorism begins." He also creates analogies between ancient wars and the war that's on television right now.

"There's so much confusion: What are they going to do? What are we going to do?," says Kari Drew, 18, a student in one of Mr. Draper's American-history classes. It helps, she says, that he makes "correlations about what's happening now and the past. Once you can look back at history, you can begin to understand."

In this generation, Mr. Draper says, "the cold war's been won, there have been incredible scientific and medical breakthroughs, capitalism has proven to work really well." But September 11 forced students to realize that "by no stretch of the imagination have all the world's problems been solved." There's a pedagogical opportunity in that insecurity, he says. "It's forcing them out of their niche." Students are thinking beyond "'I'm an American, I've been touched by this.' They're asking questions about who we are in the world and how the world perceives us."

John Voll, a professor of Islamic history at Georgetown University, has seen a parallel effect among the Muslim students in his classes. "Even the relatively quiet Muslim students seem to feel the need to put their views out on the table in a way they might not have done before," he says. Among his non-Muslim students, Mr. Voll sees a greater willingness to be drawn out of old habits of thought. "I have been asked more times in the last three weeks than in the last three years, 'Is Islam inherently violent?'" The surprising thing, he says, is that there's "a lot more interest and a lot more openness--people are much more willing to listen to the answer."

They are also more willing to ask questions. Mr. Voll has noticed that students aren't afraid to ask "so-called stupid questions," things that they think they're already supposed to know. "Currently, the desire to know is stronger than the desire to look good."

A LOST SENSE OF ORDER

Students are engaging in classes as fiercely as they are, says Sven Birkerts, because they're searching for a structure to replace the sense of order that disintegrated the day that planes started dropping out of the sky. The past month, says Mr. Birkerts, who teaches writing at Mount Holyoke College, has been "a particular shock to a particular generation, one that grew up entirely shielded from the world by a kind of media membrane--everything done and known was filtered through the entertainment media." On September 11, media failed them. "What we got was a riveting event in spades and a void otherwise. There was a lack of an Oz behind the curtain; there was an interpretive void. A question had been asked that was so overwhelming that no kind of answer could be made--we're still looking for it, asking, What is Islam and why did this happen?"

LOOKING FOR ANSWERS

Existential variations on those questions have found their way into the classroom as well, says Mr. Birkerts. Students want to find out more about Afghanistan, but they are also looking for answers on a broader scale. And while students may be flocking to classes on Islam, he believes that his classes on poetry and creative writing are just as crucial for those who are trying to make sense of the unthinkable. With the very horror of the events of September 11, he says, "we have been given a context that makes the search for meaning obviously very important."

Just as students feel compelled to take their classes more seriously, instructors now are taking their students more seriously. The renewed sense of purpose among professors brings a learning curve of its own. "This is forcing students to go beyond the box, which is good," says Mr. Draper, "because they bring that to the classroom and and force us to rethink the way we do things."

Mr. Birkerts thinks that his writing classes have helped students grapple with the emotional turmoil that followed the attacks, but he chides himself for not taking even greater advantage of the moment. "Maybe I didn't make it a specific teaching opportunity," he says. "I wish I had been given a chance to rise to my role, to go beyond the subject I already teach."

The students' curiosity has given Mr. O'Donnell, at John Jay College, another concern: Terrorism has suddenly become much more complex. "I feel very ill-equipped to do this, because now, what are we talking about?"

Psychology--what kind of person would do this? You could spend a whole semester just trying to answer that question. We're talking about religion, geography, history. You really need other people in the classroom to do it right."

Perhaps, he says, he'll find a way to bring other faculty members into the discussion. In any case, getting up to speed on the issues raised by the terrorist attack will take some time. Mr. O'Donnell wonders if instructors can educate themselves fast enough to take advantage of students' newfound focus. "Historically, we have a very short attention span."

"Maybe I'm wrong about this, but I think there's a lot of people who wish this would go away," Mr. O'Donnell adds. "If they don't strike again, it creates a problem keeping interest when the funerals are over."

'A BIGGER REASON'

At Waubensee, at least one of Mr. Draper's students thinks otherwise. Matt Roberts, 28, has always viewed earning a degree in education and becoming a teacher as a way of giving back to the country. But now, he says, "There's more determination. There's a bigger reason behind it." He feels a sense of purpose that he didn't before September 11.

"I think it'll last," he says. "And I hope when it's over, and I'm out teaching, that this feeling is something that will carry over and that I can give to my students."

New Courses On One Campus

The University of California at Los Angeles created 50 seminars--to be taken pass/no pass--on subjects related to the terrorist attacks of September 11. The course titles follow:

Understanding the Taliban

Understanding the Unthinkable and Incomprehensible

Honor & Shame and the Clash of Civilizations

The Struggle to Understand, the Struggle to Respond

Bin Laden and Terrorism Outside the U.S.: The Case of Uzbekistan

Navigating Between Blithesome Optimism and Cultural Despair

Information Technology and Infrastructure in Times of Crisis

Making Sense of the New World Disorder

Fictions of Terror vs. Real Terror

National Security in the 21st Century

War, Terror and Violence: Reflecting on Machiavelli

What Do We Tell the Children?: Parenting Issues

Implications of World Crises for Student Stress and Academic Achievement: Coping Strategies

Historical Perspectives on September 11

Stress and Coping in the Aftermath of a National Disaster

Culture and the Deferral of Violence

America as Hyperpower

An "East" and a "West"? Thinking about the "Clash of Civilizations"

Beyond Tears: Evidence, Fact, and Crisis

Recognizing and Dealing With Stress During a Time of Crisis

The Search for Identity? Insurgent Islam and the Response of the West--the Sudanese Case

Psychological Perspectives: Anxiety, Stress, and Depression

The Map of Love, an Exploration of Islam and the Colonial Experience Through a Novel by Egyptian Writer Adhaf Soueif

Terrorism and the Politics of Knowledge

War and Autobiography: Testimonials from Algeria and the Belgian Congo

Women's Participation in Political Violence

Understanding, Respecting and Honoring the First Amendment in a Terrorist Environment

Concepts of the Terror in Western Culture from the French Revolution to the Present

September 11th: Reflections on Terrorism, Its Origins and Consequences

Terror and Its Psychological Impact

The World Conference Against Racism: Illusions, Collusions, and/or Opportunities

Silence, Slogans, and Flags

Law and the Use of Force

Terror and the Dilemmas of American Power

Biological and Chemical Weapons: Assessing the Terrorist Threat

The Terror of History: A Search for Justice

Responses to National and Personal Tragedies in the Bible (Prophets and Psalms)

Justice and War: The Ethics of International Conflicts

Privilege, Power, and Difference: Is Tolerance Enough?

Literature as Mourning: China and Greece

Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War

What the U.S. Should Do to Be Popular in the Third World

International English-Language Newspaper Coverage

Echoes of Terror in Brain, Mind, and Literature

The Role of Art and Technology in Times of War

Perspectives on War and Terror Thereto--Through Theatre, Art and Music

Poetry and Loss

Psychology of Group Identity

At War With the Afghans and Chechens: the Russian Experience

Terror & Society in Bergman's Films

PHOTO (COLOR): Jean Bethke Elhstain expected 30 students for her graduate seminar at the U. of Chicago on "Politics, Ethics, and Terror." Eighty showed up.

PHOTO (COLOR): Timothy Dean Draper of Waubensee Community College: The events of September 11 are giving students "historical empathy."

PHOTO (COLOR): Seven Birkerts of Mount Holyoke: "We have been given a context that makes the search for meaning obviously very important."

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By Ana Marie Cox

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