

## Rutgers DSW Program Syllabus

**Module Title:** Psychology of Radicalization

**Instructor:**

**Residency:** April 2019

**Date:**

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### Module Description:

Radicalization is an increased acceptance of violence for a political cause. Until recently, radicalization research focused mostly on Islamic terrorists, “people not like us.” However, in the past 2.5 years, political events in the United States have demonstrated that radicalization affects “us” as much as “them.” Hate crimes, antisemitism, interracial violence and shootings are at an unprecedented high. The U.S. has become radicalized. The threat of Islamic terrorism fades in comparison to the much deadlier threat of Right-wing extremism. We need to understand radicalization in our midst to address its causes, and to prevent and reverse its course.

With this in mind, we will discuss theory of radicalization and apply it to the case of modern-day USA. We will begin with individual radicalization (how a person can become radicalized without group or mass support); move on to radicalization in small groups (how a face-to-face group can gradually become radicalized through group dynamics); and conclude with mass radicalization (how a large impersonal collective can become radicalized as a whole). What are some symptoms of radicalization that can be observed in people around us? What are some conditions that are especially conducive to radicalization? What are some preventative and counter-measures that can reduce radicalization?

### Module Objectives:

1. To understand individual radicalization, including psychological mechanisms that can lead up to it, lone wolves, school shooters and assassins.
2. To understand group radicalization, including psychological mechanisms of group radicalization, and the profound (yet counter-intuitive) power of groups.
3. To understand mass radicalization, including psychological mechanisms of mass radicalization, propaganda, martyrdom, jujitsu politics and self-sacrifice.

### Required Readings (1-3):

1. McCauley, C., & Moskalenko, S. (2008). Mechanisms of political radicalization: Pathways toward terrorism. *Terrorism and political violence*, 20(3), 415-433.

(Available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09546550802073367>)

2. McCauley, C., & Moskaleiko, S. (2017). Understanding political radicalization: The two-pyramids model. *American Psychologist*, 72(3), 205.

(Available at <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-13879-002>)

3. McCauley, C., Moskaleiko, S., & Van Son, B. (2013). Characteristics of lone-wolf violent offenders: A comparison of assassins and school attackers. *Perspectives on Terrorism*, 7(1), 4-24.

(Available at <http://www.terrorismanalysts.com/pt/index.php/pot/article/download/240/pdf>)

### **Recommended Readings:**

Moskaleiko, S., & McCauley, C. (2011). The psychology of lone-wolf terrorism. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 24(2), 115-126.

McCauley, C. R., & Moskaleiko, S. (2016). *Friction: How conflict radicalizes them and us*. Oxford University Press.

Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2006). Toward a psychological science for a cultural species. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1(3), 251-269.