

Policing Black Bodies
George Mason University
Spring 2024

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Meeting Times:

Mondays :1:30 to 4:10 PM (EST)
Remote: Virtual Delivery Systems

Office Hours: By Appointment

Course Description:

This course will examine the origins of policing and its impact on modern-day policing in America. Through the use of guest lectures, printed materials and other mediums, students will be provided with a unique opportunity to challenge their assumptions about the role of police in Black and brown communities from the inception of slave patrols through 21st Century Policing concepts. This course will examine “hot button” legal topics such as the death penalty, police violence, surveillance, criminal justice reform, mass incarceration, sentencing mandates, the “war on drugs” and more as they relate to Black bodies, communities and others marginalized by the criminal-legal system. Additionally, we will examine the emotional, legal, and moral complexities of America’s criminal justice system when viewed through the lived experiences of those disproportionately impacted.

Resources:

Policing Black Bodies: How Black Lives Are Surveilled and How to Work for Change

Publisher : Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Updated edition (March 1, 2021)

ISBN-10 : 1538142546

ISBN-13 : 978-1538142547

Our Enemies In Blue: Police and Power In America

Author: Kristian Williams

Publisher : AK Press; Revised edition (August 18, 2015)

ISBN-10 : 1849352151

ISBN-13 : 978-1849352154

The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness

Author: Michele Alexander

Publisher : The New Press; 10th Anniversary ed. edition (January 7, 2020)

ISBN-10 : 1620971933

ISBN-13 : 978-1620971932

Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students will be able to discuss different ways race, ethnicity, and their historical underpinnings relate to policing in America. They will be able to describe and critique the ways in which racial attitudes are theorized, discussed, marginalized and/or weaponized. Students will understand the impact statistics and the theoretical frameworks such as CompStat, and data collection target Black and brown bodies and communities. Students will understand how different attitudes influence and shape political behavior, laws and policies. Finally, they will be familiar with key issues of race in politics and will be able to talk about the pros and cons of various social science approaches to studying race and its effects on the development and implementation of domestic policing policies.

Coursework Expectations

My general expectations are you will come to class prepared to fully participate. Completing reading assignments is an integral component of being prepared. It also means being on time and keeping distractions to a minimum. My additional expectations are that you regard classmates with respect—listening and connecting with them in a meaningful way. Actively engaging in the discussions in a thoughtful, critical manner.

My specific expectations are that students will complete all assigned readings, pre-class and out of classroom activities. Unless an assignment is explicitly labeled as collaborative, I expect each person will present their own work. Any work completed for another class must be disclosed (do not turn in the same paper or assignment for two different courses without prior approval). No late assignments will be accepted unless a prior extension was granted or is required by university policy.

Participation and Attendance

Class attendance and participation are important components of learning in this course. To account for this, a portion of the final grade is based on your regular attendance and active participation (see grading section). That said, I also recognize that students may need to miss class for a variety of reasons (religious observance, university-sanctioned events, or illness). When you must miss class, please notify me (at least 24 hours in advance except for illness/emergency), so we can discuss alternative arrangements for in-class associated work. If you encounter extenuating circumstances and must miss a class, please email me immediately.

NOTE: While you are not required to always have your camera on (i.e., personal break or technology issue) this is a synchronous environment. Therefore, I strongly encourage you to do so, especially when you are speaking or participating in discussions.

Disability Statement/Accommodations

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you are seeking accommodations for this class, please first visit <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email: ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474 In accordance with university policies, please discuss your approved accommodations with me.

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Honor Code

George Mason University has an Honor Code, which requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. Please see the [Office for Academic Integrity](#) for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. Three fundamental principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own, as defined by the assignment; (2) when you use the work, the words, or the ideas of others, including fellow students, ChatGPT, Generative-AI tools or online sites, you must give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment or exam, ask for clarification. No grade is important enough to justify academic misconduct. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity.

Assignments: 400 points

In-class Presentation: 75 points

Blackboard Discussions: 100 points (20 points per discussion)

Final Paper: 150 points

Reflective Essay/Faces of Resilience Events: 50 points

Classroom participation: 25 points (Up to 2 points per class)

*Exceptions: Week1: (no points) Week 14: (Max 1 point)

Grading Scale:

A+	97-100 (388-400)	B+	87-89 (348-359)	C+	77-79 (308-319)
A	93-96 (372-387)	B	83-86 (332-347)	C	73-76 (292-307)
A-	90-92 (360-371)	B-	80-82 (320-331)	C-	70-72 (280-291)
D	60-69 (240-279)				
F	59 -0 (239 and below)				

*Grades will be rounded up for .5 or higher and down for .4 or lower.

Important Dates:

February 10, 2024: Justice Art Coalition

February 16, 2024: An Incarcerated Salon

March 4, 2024: Winter Recess (no classes)

March 11, 2024: Faces of Resilience Exhibit

March 15, 2024: The Innocents Punch Party

March 25, 2024: Reflective Essay

May 6, 2024: Final Paper

Assignments and related rubrics

In-Class Presentation: 75 points

Students (individual projects) will identify a topic, refer to the final paper for suggestions, that further explore the intersectionality of policing, Black bodies, and communities. The purpose of the exercise is to introduce students to the systems by which race, and policies immediately intersect. Students will identify a topic, provide a background summary, and discuss the potential impact on select populations. For example, there has been a resurgence in federal programs such as Project Safe neighborhoods (PSN). According to the Department of Justice (DOJ) website, “launched in 2001, the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) program is a nationwide initiative that brings together federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement officials, prosecutors, community leaders, and other stakeholders to identify the most pressing violent crime problems in a community and develop comprehensive solutions to address them “What is the history behind the initiative? What are the immediate and long-term implications? To and for whom? The facilitators should consider learning aids, PowerPoint, media clips, or other mediums by which they can engage the class in a rich, in-depth discussion about their topic of choice. Think critically about the subject matter and what information you believe is pertinent to move the conversation forward. The length of the presentation and discussion is limited to 25-30 minutes.

Blackboard Discussions: 100 points

There will be five (5) posts/threads during the course. Posts will take a variety of formats. For example, I will start the thread and students must respond to the initial post and another student's comments. There may be a thread about a topic of interest, such as Chicago police officer, Karol Chwiesiuk and his sister were on trial in Washington, D.C., alleging he breached the U.S. Capitol on January 6 to participate in the mob attack. What tensions exist between espoused and lived values of policing and 1st Amendment rights? The key to the discussions is to be flexible and engaged. The below rubric will be used to evaluate and assess your contributions.

Reflective Essay/Faces of Resilience Events: 50 points

Students will attend at least one other event in addition to a self-guided classroom visit to Faces of Resilience Exhibition on March 11, 2024, in lieu of class. Students will write a two-page reflective essay. The purpose of writing the reflective essay is to provide a platform for students to not only recount a particular life experience, but to explore how the student has changed or learned from those experiences; or how your thoughts and/or impressions regarding policing, and the criminal-legal system may have changed, developed or evolved throughout the course. Reflective Essays will be due on March 25, 2024, by 11:59 PM EST.

Final Paper: 150 points

Building on your in-class presentation, provide an in-depth analysis of your topic of choice. For example, how might we view crime and the carceral state through the television series, “Orange is the New Black” when compared to “Queen of the South?” Or What was the impact of series like “COPS” and “CSI” on the policing profession, the public’s perception of law enforcement and crime in America? Papers will be due on May 6, 2024, by 11:59 PM EST.

Classroom Participation: 25 points

Present and actively participating: 2 points per class
Present, not actively participating: 1 point per class
Absent or not participating: 0 points per class

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Schedule is subject to change. Students will be notified via Blackboard and email regarding any changes or announcements.

Week 1: January 22, 2024

Introductions

Syllabus

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Chapter 1: Setting the Stage (pp.1-22)

Week 2: January 29, 2024

The New Jim Crow

Introduction and Chapter 1: The Rebirth of Caste (pp. 1-58)

Week 3: February 5, 2024

Our Enemies in Blue

Chapter 2: Origins of American Policing (pp.51-87)

Chapter 3: The Genesis of a Policed Society (pp. 88-119)

Week 4: February 12, 2024

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Chapter 5: The Prison Industrial Complex (pp.103-118)

The New Jim Crow

Chapter 5: The New Jim Crow (pp. 178-220)

Week 5: February 19, 2024

Movements: Black Lives Matter

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Appendix A: High-Profile Shootings of Black Men and the Outcomes

Police Violence and Racial Terror

Tyre Nichol's Death is America's Shame:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/27/opinion/tyre-nichols-video.html>

Presentation(s)

Week 6: February 26, 2024

In class viewing and discussion:

This Is Not Sustainable: The Current State of Policing in America with Joe Gamaldi

<https://fop.net/2023/02/joe-gamaldi-blue-view-podcast/>

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Blue Lives Matter, Back the Blue, The Thin Blue Line
<https://theweek.com/articles/960175/what-blue-lives-matter-always-about>
Presentation(s)

March 4, 2024: Spring Recess (no classes)

Week 7: March 11, 2024 (Self-guided tour in lieu of class)

Faces of Resilience Exhibition: Arlington Campus

Week 8: March 18, 2024

In class viewings and discussion:

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/highlights-from-an-event-on-police-shootings-of-unarmed-black-males-in-america/>

WALKING WHILE BLACK: L.O.V.E. Is The Answer”

<https://vimeo.com/ajali/wwbprivate94>

Presentation(s)

Week 9: March 25, 2024

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Chapter 10: Intersectionality, Color-Blind racism, and A Call to Action, (pp.211-234)

The New Jim Crow

Chapter 6: The Fire This Time (pp.236-244)

Presentation(s)

Week 10: April 1, 2024

Presentation(s)

Week 11: April 8, 2024

Article: Before He Was UVA Police Chief, Timothy Longo Helmed DNA Dragnet That Targeted Black Men.

<https://theintercept.com/2021/07/09/charlottesville-police-dna-dragnet-timothy-longo/>

Surveillance from Slave Patrols to Modern Day.

Body worn Cameras, Unmanned Aerial Devices, Social Media, License Plate Readers (LPRs), Facial Recognition Software, Personal Alarm Systems (Ring)

Presentation(s)

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Week 12: April 15, 2024

Our Enemies in Blue

Chapter 9: Your Friendly Neighborhood Police State (pp. 321-361)

Presentation(s)

Week 13: April 22, 2024

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Chapter 9: The Ultimate Failure: Exoneration (pp.179-209)

Presentation(s)

Week 14: April 29, 2024

Our Enemies in Blue

Afterword: Making Police Obsolete (pp. 362-397)

Model for Activism & Advocacy: Agenda, Allies, Accomplices, Alliance, Agency, Accomplish
Agenda

Presentation(s)

Faces of Resilience Events: Mason Exhibitions, Arlington Campus

Faces of Resilience: January 6 - March 30, 2024

Justice Art Coalition: Conor Broderick (Artist), February 10, 2024, 12:00-2:00 PM. There is no experience required, and materials will be provided. This workshop is held in conjunction with the Faces of Resilience exhibition featuring works by 14 previously or currently incarcerated artists, as well as three professional artists. [RSVP](#) required.

An Incarcerated Salon, Carlos Walker (Artist), February 16, 2024, 7:00-9:00 PM. The night will kick off with a Political Rap Battle performance. There will be a variety of musical performances, spoken word poetry, and other creative presentations. The microphone will be open to any audience members who would like to perform. [RSVP](#) required.

The Innocents Punch Party with Maria Gaspar on Friday, March 15, 2024, 7:00-9:00 PM. Using a variety of found-object and home-made instruments, electronic soundscapes, and spoken texts, the one-hour dramatic soundscape comprised of at least seventeen individual tableaux will explore various aspects of the issues surrounding the American criminal justice system. [RSVP](#) required.

Questions regarding the exhibits, or registration should be directed to **Alissa Maru** at **amaru@gmu.edu**

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BLACKBOARD DISCUSSION RUBRIC:

The attached rubric will be used to evaluate and assess your contributions.

Criteria	Below Expectations	Proficient	Exemplary
Promptness and Initiative	0 Points No posting, no credit for postings outside of the date range	1 Point Contributes but doesn't meet the requirement of responding to peer postings, and /or posts all requirements	2 Points Posts original contributions, responds to peers' postings, and posts within the timeframe
Mechanics of Writing	0 Points Poor spelling and grammar in posts, format is difficult to read.	1 Point An error in spelling and grammar, yet overall format is clear.	2 Points Submissions are grammatically correct, posts with rare misspellings. format is easy to read/ professional delivery.
Relevance of Post	0 Points Posts topics not related to the discussion; remarks are not backed up by a reference rehashes or summarizes other postings; unclear connection to topic; minimal expression of opinions or ideas	1 Point Posts are short in length and offer no further insight into the topic: opinions and ideas are stated with occasional lack of connection to topic, and/or provide limited citations (from text, website, etc.) for the community to reference.	2 Points Consistently posts topics related to the assigned topic; cites at least one but preferably several credible references related to the topic (text, website, or other credible/scholarly references); expresses opinions and ideas in a clear and concise manner with obvious connection to topic.
Creating Community	0 Points Argumentative or abrasive. No peer interaction	1 Point Displays an effort to become involved with group, interacts with others. This category is concerned with quality of interactions.	2 Points Frequently attempts to motivate the group discussion; presents creative approaches to topic, can differ or counter peers' points with diplomacy, if

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			applicable. Refers to peer contributions.
Critical Thinking/Analysis	0 Points Errors in interpreting topics; opinion-based comments only, superficial commentary	1 Point Accurately interprets topic uses main points of information from resources/references; may repeat the ideas of others but attempts to offer new insight, response does not provoke significant new thinking or further discussion.	2 Points Interprets topics in accurate and insightful ways. Uses information thoughtfully, in ways that are factually relevant and accurate; postings show analysis, might offer alternatives or creative viewpoints based on concrete evidence.

FINAL PAPER AND SUGGESTED TOPICS:

This assignment will provide students with an opportunity for a more in-depth examination of issues raised in the lectures, readings, or discussions. Suggested topics or ideas are as follows:

The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2021
Stand Your Ground
Immigration Policies and Reform
Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994
School to Prison Pipeline (School Discipline)
Criminal Justice System
Voting Rights Act of 1965
For the People Act (2021)
The John Lewis Voting Rights Act
“Stop and Frisk”
Prison Industrial Complex/Private Prisons/Prison Abolitionism
Bail Reform
Media, Policing and Black bodies
Reproductive Rights
Surveillance and privacy
Technology and Policing
Police Civilian Review Boards and Oversight
21st Century Policing
Crime trends and statistics
Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN)
Television, Movies, and Social Media and Crime
US Patriot Act
Militarization/Demilitarization of Policing
Asset Forfeiture Laws
Policing Philosophies and approaches (Community Oriented, Problem Solving, Evidence-based)
History of Policing

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Police Violence/Police Shootings
Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, White Lives Matter, All Lives Matter
Barriers to re-entry for returning citizens
Unions, Qualified Immunity, and other Police Protections
False Confessions

*If there are other areas of interest you would like to explore, please submit topic for approval

Papers **must** be double-spaced, 4 full pages in length (no more), adhere to APA 6 or 7 formatting rules, and be submitted as a **Word document** through SafeAssign. **PDFs will not be accepted.** Page length does not include title and reference pages. Each paper must contain at least **four (4) scholarly** references of which no more than **one (1) can be an internet source.** Be careful and cite all your sources. Wikipedia is **not** considered a scholarly source. (See Purdue OWL: https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html).

Late submissions will receive an automatic 10% per day penalty. Assignments more than 48 hours late will not be accepted.

Rubric:

Introduction and Conclusion (25 points)

A: Groundwork and **thesis** are clearly laid out for the direction of the paper. The author makes succinct, insightful conclusions based on the review.

B: Readers are introduced to the overall topic. Concluding remarks show some synthesis of ideas, though not all are supported in the body of the paper.

C: Neither implicit nor explicit reference is made to the topic. No indication author tried to synthesize information.

Body, Flow of the Review (50 points)

A: Transitions tie sections together as well as adjacent paragraphs. The paper flows from general ideas to specific conclusions. Writing is crisp, clear, and succinct. The writer incorporates a creative voice when appropriate. No spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors are made.

B: There is a basic flow from one section to the next, but not all sections or paragraphs fall in a natural or logical order. Writing is generally clear, but unnecessary words are occasionally used. Meaning is sometimes hidden. A few spelling, grammar, or punctuation errors are made.

C: The paper appears to have no direction, with subtopics appearing disjointed. It is hard to know what the writer is trying to express. Writing is convoluted. Misspelled words, incorrect grammar, and improper punctuation are frequent.

Coverage of Content (50 points)

A: The appropriate content is covered in depth without being redundant. Sources are cited when specific statements are made.

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B: All major sections of the pertinent content are included, but not covered in as much depth, or as explicitly, as expected.

C: Major sections of pertinent content have been omitted, glossed over, or unnecessarily repeated.

Format, Sources and Citations (25 points)

A: More than four (4) sources are used to create the paper, with the majority being research articles. Citations, body and references follow APA format. Essential information is accurate, complete, relevant, and supportive of the thesis or main ideas.

B: Four (4) sources are used to create the paper, with mostly practitioner articles used. Citations follow APA format; however, a few errors in essential information are evident.

C: Less than four (4) sources are used, with no research articles cited. Generally, did not follow APA format; or essential information is missing.

Participation:

The following criteria will be used to assess participation.

Students prepare for and actively engage in class discussion (e.g., demonstrate active listening, not distracted by electronics or peers).

Students thoughtfully engage in class assignments and activities.

Students constructively participate in group activities or discussions.

Students participate in class and Blackboard discussions by raising informed discussion points; connecting discussion to reading material, news, and relevant experiences; asking questions; actively listening to other perspectives; sharing the space with others.