

# CRIM 491—HONORS SEMINAR

## Fall 2016

Dr. Charlotte Gill | Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University  
Wednesdays 10:30am–1:10pm | Innovation Hall 333, Fairfax Campus

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### Course Description

#### **“Bar Crawls and Drunken Brawls: Police-Community Partnerships to Reduce Alcohol-Related Crime**

Community policing has recently received national media and policy attention for its potential to improve strained relationships between police and communities. But while there is research to suggest that community policing helps improve citizens’ perceptions of the police, its potential to prevent crime is less clear. Some studies suggest community policing could have a longer term impact on crime when relationship building is combined with targeted problem solving activities that involve both police and communities, but there are still many gaps in the research. Which aspects of police-community partnerships are most effective for preventing crime? Who and what do we mean by “the community?” How can police balance the needs of different communities that exist within the same place?

The Clarendon restaurant and bar district in Arlington County is a fascinating setting to study these issues. Here police are faced with problems of alcohol-related crime and violence that are likely to increase as the area develops and the economy improves. They also have to balance the needs and rights of a number of different communities that share the same small space—business owners who want to make a profit, diners and drinkers who (as long as they are 21!) have the right to enjoy themselves over a few drinks, and residents who deserve to feel safe in their homes. What role should the police play in protecting people who are engaging in legal behavior on private property while also ensuring such behavior does not threaten public safety or violate laws? How should they work with these different groups to preserve police-community relationships while also preventing crime?

In this course we will collaborate with the Arlington County Police Department to develop a police-community partnership to reduce alcohol-related crime and harm in Clarendon. The course will follow a “participatory action research” framework in which theories, research questions, and strategies for assessment are developed in collaboration with the people (police, business owners, and community members) who are being studied. Students will learn how to negotiate relationships with agencies and individuals, develop studies that are relevant to both research and practice, and contribute to the literature on community policing implementation.

### Course Activities

In the first part of the course students will be introduced to theoretical and methodological concepts related to the course topic, including:

- Prior research on community policing, problem-oriented policing, situational crime prevention, and civil remedies for crime prevention
- Prior research on alcohol-related crime problems
- Theoretical perspectives on police-community relations
- Principles of participatory action research and program evaluation

Students will meet with representatives from Arlington County Police Department to discuss the real-world problems faced by the officers and their existing and planned strategies for reducing crime. Students will conduct a needs assessment for the department, analyze real crime data, and develop research questions and information sharing strategies.

Following this introduction to the key issues, students will work with the police department to develop their own research projects, which may include:

- Studying crime trends in the community
- Testing the impact of a new policing strategy
- Analyzing the available evidence to suggest new strategies
- Developing surveys and focus groups to assess community perceptions of crime and the police
- Testing theories of crime in hot spots or police-community relations

Students will work with the instructor to develop different types of publications based on their projects, such as academic journal articles and policy reports for the police department. They will learn how to tailor their writing to the appropriate audience. Students will also present their research to the CLS faculty and representatives from the police department at the end of the course.

## **Research and Scholarship-Intensive Course and Honors Program Information**

This class is designated as a *Students as Scholars* Research and Scholarship (RS) Intensive Course, which means that you will have the opportunity to work on a real-life research project and present your results beyond the classroom. To learn more about *Students as Scholars*, visit <http://oscar.gmu.edu>.

On completion of this course you should be familiar with the principles of participatory action research and research methods, be able to discuss prior research on community policing, alcohol-related crime, and place-based crime prevention, and have developed a research question and research proposal that will be implemented in the Spring semester (CRIM 492).

### **RS Student Learning Outcomes**

In this RS-designated course, students will:

- Create an original scholarly or creative project
- Communicate knowledge from an original scholarly or creative project
- Engage in scholarly inquiry by:
  - Articulating and refining a scholarly question
  - Following ethical principles
  - Gathering evidence appropriate to the question
  - Assessing the validity of key assumptions and evidence

The Criminology, Law and Society Honors Program is open to Criminology, Law and Society majors who show the ability and drive to benefit from intensive study in the honors seminars. There are no formal course or GPA requirements, although the most promising candidates will be students who have taken challenging courses at Mason and who have earned at least a 3.5 overall/cumulative GPA. Students must have permission to participate in this course and are expected to make a one-year commitment to participate in both CRIM 491 and CRIM 492. Students who successfully complete CRIM 491 and 492 with a GPA of 3.5 or above will receive the honors designation in Criminology, Law and Society when they graduate and the letters “RS” will appear on their academic transcripts indicating they have participated in a Research and Scholarship Intensive course. The six credits from these two courses count in the elective category and toward the criminal justice concentration. General information on the Honors program is available at <http://cls.gmu.edu/undergraduate/honors-research>.

## Course Website and Communications

- The syllabus, course schedule, certain readings, and additional information and announcements will be posted on Blackboard (<http://mymasonportal.gmu.edu>). Announcements will also be sent to your Mason email address. Please be sure to check your Mason email regularly or ensure that you have set up email forwarding correctly. For privacy reasons you should use your Mason email address to correspond with me.
- My contact information is at the beginning of this document. Email is the best way to reach me. I will reply to emails and voicemails within 24 hours during the week and by Monday morning if messages are sent on Fridays or over the weekend. Please include “CRIM 491” in the subject line of emails and your full name in the message. Leave your full name and a callback number or email address in voice messages.
- I hold scheduled office hours on Wednesdays after class (2-4pm). If this time doesn’t work for you, you are welcome to email me or speak to me during class to set up a face-to-face appointment. Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class.

## Course Format and Guidelines

Classes will involve lecture, discussion, and other group activities. Students are expected to participate actively in each class. This approach relies heavily on students completing the assigned readings before class and coming prepared to discuss them. This will also help you to develop your own critical thinking through discussion and questions and apply your knowledge to the development of your research project.

Teamwork and mutual respect are key to success in this class. Please respect your instructor and classmates by coming to class on time and prepared and actively listening to others (including putting away cell-phones/Internet unless required for a class activity). Sometimes we will talk about uncomfortable or controversial topics where students have differing opinions. I aim to make my classroom a safe space in which students feel comfortable discussing their ideas, experiences, and opinions. I encourage **respectful** debate and disagreement, and you should always feel free to ask me questions and challenge what I say. Please be considerate of the viewpoints and privacy of others.

## Course Requirements and Student Evaluation

### 1. Participation and Progress (10 points)

All students are expected to attend class and actively participate in discussion and in-class activities.

### 2. Research Journal (10 points)

You will keep a research journal (typed in Microsoft Word or equivalent) throughout the year that documents the number of hours you spent working on your project (both inside and outside of class, and including your class reading and other assignments), what you were doing, what you accomplished, and any questions and ideas you have while you are working. Your full journal for this semester should be turned in for grading by the last day of class (December 7); however, you may also be asked to submit excerpts from your journal as homework assignments (see below).

### 3. Homework Assignments (20 points)

Various homework assignments will be assigned throughout the semester, which may require you to develop questions based on reading, complete an exercise, or submit an excerpt from your journal. Assignments will be posted on Blackboard and are listed under [Tentative Course Schedule and Reading Assignments](#) starting on page 6.

### 4. Research Question (20 points)

During the first part of the semester you will develop a research question to focus on for the rest of the year. On **October 26** you will come to class prepared to give a brief presentation of your question and why you chose it. We will then discuss and refine the questions as a class.

### 5. Research Proposal (40 points)

This semester will culminate with the production of a written research proposal (no more than 10 pages) that you will present to the class on **December 7** and turn in by **December 14**. The proposal will include your research question, background literature, and planned methodology for studying the question. This proposal will form the basis for your participation in CRIM 492 in the Spring 2017 semester.

Letter grades for this course will be based on the following points breakdown:

A+	97-100	A	93-96.9	A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9	B	83-86.9	B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9	C	73-76.9	C-	70-72.9
		D	60-69.9		
		F	59.9 or less		

## Course Policies and Information

### Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who needs academic accommodations, please contact Disability Services (<http://ods.gmu.edu>) at (703) 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. If you have already contacted ODS and you are waiting to hear from a counselor, please let me know.

## Academic Integrity and the GMU Honor Code

Students are expected to abide by the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing. Please see <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/> for a full description of the Code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. Instructors are required to report all violations of the Honor Code to the GMU Honor Committee. Violations will likely result in a failing grade for the assignment and may result in a failing grade for the course, plus any additional penalties determined by the Committee, which could include dismissal from the university. In this course, academic integrity means that you will properly cite the words, work, and ideas of others, including your classmates, in all your work and work independently where required. If you have any doubt as to whether you are in compliance with the Honor Code, always ask me.

## Enrollment Statement

**You** are responsible for verifying your enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published each year in the Schedule of Classes, available from the Registrar's website (<http://registrar.gmu.edu>).

**Last day to add: September 6**

**Last day to drop: September 6 (no tuition penalty); September 20 (33% tuition penalty); September 30 (67% tuition penalty)**

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the Dean and is only allowed for nonacademic reasons. Undergraduate students may choose to exercise a selective withdrawal. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.

## Resources

### Blackboard

Visit <http://coursessupport.gmu.edu> if you need help using Blackboard. Walk-in assistance is available at the Collaborative Learning Hub, 311 Johnson Center.

### The Writing Center and Mason Library

The Writing Center at Mason (<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>) is a fantastic and free resource providing information and one-on-one tutoring for all your writing needs. While I am always willing to review drafts of your writing and provide feedback, consider the Writing Center if you need more intensive assistance with any part of the writing process, from planning and organizing your paper to proof-reading and revising. Their website also has guides on best practices for reading, note-taking, and citing sources. Mason Library also has excellent tutorials on writing, reading, note-taking, giving presentations, time management, and academic integrity. See <http://library.gmu.edu/tutorials> for a full list.

### Personal and Academic Resources

If you are struggling, in crisis, or just need information and resources, the Offices of University Life provide support and assistance for many areas of your personal and academic life, including academic integrity, counseling and psychological services, disability services, diversity and inclusion, health and wellness, LGBTQ resources, and advice for international students. See <http://ulife.gmu.edu/home/offices-of-university-life/> for a full listing of service areas and contact information.

## Tentative Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The weekly coverage might change as it depends on the progress of the class. Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. Please do any assigned reading and homework before the class for which it is listed. Readings will be posted on Blackboard.

Last updated: November 2, 2016

Week	Date	Content & Readings	Homework due
1	Aug-31	<b>Class Introduction</b> No assigned reading	<i>None</i>
2	Sep-7	<b>Introduction to Participatory Action Research</b> Whyte (1989) <i>Participatory Action Research Toolkit</i> <i>How to Write a Research Question</i>	Complete CITI ethics training and bring proof to class
3	Sep-14	<b>Site Visit to ACPD</b> Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995), Chapters 1-2	<i>None</i>
4	Sep-21	<b>Thinking about Crime and Place</b> Weisburd (2015) Cohen & Felson (1979) Wilson & Kelling (1982) Eck, Clarke, & Guerette (2007) (skim)	Field notes from ACPD site visit due on Blackboard Bring at least 1 question from your reading for class discussion
5	Sep-28	<b>Alcohol-Related Crime</b> Newbury-Birch et al. (2016) (focus on Intro and Discussion) Felson et al. (2011) Groff (2011) Finney (2004) <i>AUDIT Questionnaire</i>	Bring at least 1 question from your reading for class discussion
6	Oct-5	<b>Community Policing and Problem Solving</b> Gill et al. (2014) Weisburd et al. (2010) Weisburd, Davis, & Gill (2015)	Bring at least 1 question from your reading for class discussion
7	Oct-12	<b>Policing in Partnership</b> Buerger (2014) Sampson, Eck, & Dunham (2010) Warburton & Shepherd (2006) Plant & Scott (2009), pages 21-40	Bring at least 1 question from your reading for class discussion
8	Oct-19	<b>Situational Crime Prevention</b> Clarke (1997), pages 4-28 Madensen & Eck (2008) Scott & Dedel (2006) Eck (2015)	Bring at least 1 question from your reading for class discussion

Week	Date	Content & Readings	Homework due
9	Oct-26	<b>Research Questions: Discussion and Planning</b> No assigned reading, but see homework assignment	Prepare informal presentation of research question and justification Bring 3 articles relevant to your topic
10	Nov-2	<b>Research Methods I: Research Proposals; Asking Questions</b> No assigned reading	None
11	Nov-9	<b>Research Methods II: Surveys, Interviews, and Focus Groups</b> See Blackboard (Course Content) for readings	Design 3 interview or survey questions relevant to your research question and bring them to class
12	Nov-16	<b>NO CLASS</b> Instructor is at a conference. Work on your proposal—classroom is available	Research journal for last week due <b>Tuesday Nov 15</b> on Blackboard
13	Nov-23	<b>NO CLASS</b> Happy Thanksgiving!	Research journal for last week due <b>Tuesday Nov 22</b> on Blackboard
14	Nov-30	<b>Introduction to Data Collection and Management</b> See Blackboard (Course Content) for readings	None
15	Dec-7	<b>Research Proposal Presentations</b> No assigned reading	Research journal for the semester due on Blackboard
	Dec-14	<b>WRITTEN RESEARCH PROPOSAL DUE ON BLACKBOARD</b>	

## References

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