

POLITICS OF CRIME POLICY
CRIM 761
Fall 2017

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1-3pm and by appointment

LECTURE

Tuesdays, 1:30–4:10 pm
West 1004
Fairfax Campus

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the socio-political context in which crime policy is created in the national and local arena, from an interdisciplinary perspective. The influence of public opinion, political institutions, interest groups, and the media will be examined in an effort to formulate “at the time” and retrospective critical evaluations of the policymaking process, with an emphasis on punishment and corrections. Over the course of the semester, we will explore questions such as: How and why has criminal justice policy changed over time? How do theoretical and ideological perspectives on criminal behavior influence the development of crime policies? How has crime been used in political campaigns? How does media coverage and interest group activity impact the discourse on crime and crime policy? What are the sources of public attitudes toward crime and how does public opinion influence criminal justice policymaking? Several contemporary crime policies will be examined in-depth as case studies, and will be compared and contrasted for relevant themes. By the end of this class, students should have developed a deep understanding of the course material and be able to discuss the impact of politics and public opinion on the development of criminal justice policy.

COURSE FORMAT

This course will be conducted as a typical graduate-level seminar. The success of the course depends on the preparation and active participation of the students and instructor alike. Although I may begin some sessions with a short lecture, we will spend most of our time discussing the readings and their implications for the topic at hand. Students are expected to generate discussion with thoughtful questions, comments and insights.

BLACKBOARD

The course syllabus, assignments, and important announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Homework assignments will be submitted via Blackboard and in hard copy. To login to Blackboard go to: <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, click on the Courses tab, and locate the link to CRIM 761 in the course list. For technical assistance with Blackboard, go to: <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/Students/>.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION

- 1) Class Participation and Discussion Questions (14%). Students will be expected to come to class having closely read and thoughtfully considered the assigned reading, and to engage in class discussions and in-class exercises. Your participation grade will be based on a) the submission of two discussion questions ahead of each class session, and b) the extent to which you consistently contribute to class discussions by critically examining the course material, raising useful questions or comments, applying the course material to other relevant topics, and creating a positive, respectful classroom environment.

Discussion questions should be submitted via Blackboard for 7 of the following 9 class sessions: 9/12, 9/19, 9/26, 10/3, 10/17, 10/24, 10/31, 11/7, 11/21.

- 2) Two Essays (20% each). Students will complete two papers based on the assigned material in the course. Papers will be evaluated based on the content and organization of your argument, demonstration of comprehension, ability to synthesize course readings and class discussions, proper referencing, and quality of the writing.
- 3) Case Study (two annotated outlines 3% each, final paper 35%, presentation 5%). Students will select one crime policy and produce an in-depth analysis of the socio-political context in which the policy was created. Detailed information on the format, requirements and evaluation criteria for the case study assignments will be forthcoming.

ASSIGNMENTS

All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard and in hard copy by 1:30pm on their due date. You must contact me ahead of time if you have a problem completing an assignment by the due date (in the case of an emergency, contact me as soon as you are able). Extensions will only be allowed in extraordinary circumstances, at the discretion of the instructor, with appropriate documentation. Unless I have approved an extension, late assignments will be penalized one grade for each day late (i.e. an A paper becomes an A- after one day, a B+ after two days, etc.).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE GMU 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. Students are expected to abide by the Mason Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing (<http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code-2/>). Instructors are required to report all violations of the Honor Code to the Mason Honor Committee. Suspected cases of plagiarism may be evaluated using anti-plagiarism software. Violations of the Honor Code may result in a failing grade for the assignment or exam, a failing grade for the course, or any additional penalties determined by the committee, including dismissal from the university.

All graded work for this class must be completed *independently*. Students should not discuss exam questions or answers with their peers, nor should their written work be edited by other

people (with the exception of typographical editing). Please be sure that the work you submit in this class is your own, and that you provide proper citations when referencing another person's words or ideas.

COURSE COMMUNICATION

Changes to the course schedule, reading assignments, and other important information will be announced during class and sent to your MasonLive email address. Be sure to check your email account regularly for updated information (if you choose to forward your Mason email to another email account, make sure that the forwarding is set up correctly).

If you have questions or concerns about the course, you are encouraged to stop by my office hours or contact me via email to set up an appointment. I try to reply to emails within two business days (but usually sooner).

CLASSROOM CONDUCT

Do your best to attend all classes. Arriving late or leaving early is very disruptive; chronic tardiness or absences will affect your participation grade. To avoid disrupting your peers and/or the instructor, please turn off all cell phones/blackberries and refrain from accessing the Internet during class. We will cover controversial issues in this course. Your fellow students may have different opinions than you (or the instructor) on some of these topics, and these opinions may be strongly held. I expect everyone in the course to respect the views of others. Class will be a place where we can respectfully discuss opposing viewpoints and offer differing perspectives.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Resources (<http://ods.gmu.edu>) at 703-993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

REQUIRED READINGS

Note: Links to all are available via the course website on Blackboard. Readings may be changed or added depending on how the course progresses.

Applegate, B. et al. (1996). Assessing public support for three-strikes-and-you're-out laws: Global versus specific attitudes. *Crime and Delinquency*, 42, 517-534.

Beckett, K. (1997). *Making crime pay: Law and order in contemporary American politics*. New York: Oxford University Press. EBOOK AT MASON LIBRARY:
<http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=3351046>

Beckett, K., Reosti, A., & Knaphus, E. (2016). The end of an era? Understanding the contradictions of criminal justice reform. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 664(1), 238-259.

- Campbell, M. C., & Schoenfeld, H. (2013). The transformation of America's penal order: A historicized political sociology of punishment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 118(5), 1375-1423.
- Cullen, F. T., Fisher, B.S. & Applegate, B. (2000). Public opinion about punishment and corrections. In Tonry, M. (Ed.), *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, 27. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Edsall, T. & Edsall, M. (1991). When the official subject is presidential politics, taxes, welfare, crime, rights, or values . . . the real subject is race. *Atlantic Monthly*, 267, 53-86.
- Enns, P. K. (2016). *Incarceration nation: How the United States became the most punitive democracy in the world*. Cambridge University Press.
- Freiberg, A. (2001). Affective versus effective punishment. *Punishment and Society* 3(2): 265–78.
- Freiberg, A., & Carson, W. G. (2010). The limits to evidence-based policy: Evidence, emotion and criminal justice. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 69(2), 152-164.
- Frost, N. A. (2010). Beyond public opinion polls: Punitive public sentiment & criminal justice policy. *Sociology Compass*, 4(3), 156-168.
- Garland, D. (2001). *The culture of control: Crime and social order in contemporary society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. EBOOK AT MASON LIBRARY: <http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2936571>
- Gottlieb, A. (2017). The Effect of Message Frames on Public Attitudes Toward Criminal Justice Reform for Nonviolent Offenses. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(5), 636-656.
- Hill, J. B., & Marion, N. E. (2017). Crime in the 2016 Presidential Election: a new era?. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 1-25.
- Jamieson, K. (1992). *Dirty politics: Deception, distraction and democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 1]
- Johnson, D. (2009). Anger about crime and support for punitive criminal justice policies. *Punishment and Society*. 11(1): 51-66.
- Johnson, D. (2008). Racial prejudice, perceived injustice, and the black-white gap in punitive attitudes. *Journal of Criminal Justice*. 36(2): 198-206.
- Percival, G.L. (2011). Smart on Crime: How a shift in political attention is changing penal policy in America. APSA 2011 Annual Meeting Paper. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=1901238>
- Ramirez, M. D. (2013). Punitive Sentiment. *Criminology*. 51(2): 329-364.
- Roberts, J.V., et al. (2002). *Penal populism and public opinion: Lessons from five countries*. New York: Oxford University Press. EBOOK AT MASON LIBRARY: <http://magik.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?BBID=2007939>
- Stalans, L. (2002). Measuring attitudes to sentencing. In Roberts, JV and Hough, M. (eds)., *Changing Attitudes to Punishment: Public opinion, crime and justice*. Portland OR: Willan Publishing.
- Thielo, A. J., Cullen, F. T., Cohen, D. M., & Chouhy, C. (2016). Rehabilitation in a red state. *Criminology & Public Policy*, 15(1), 137-170.
- Tonry, M. (2010). The social, psychological, and political causes of racial disparities in the American criminal justice system. *Crime and Justice*, 39: 273
- Unnever, J., Cochran, J., Cullen, F. and Applegate, B. (2009). The pragmatic American: Attributions of crime and the hydraulic relation hypothesis. *Justice Quarterly*, 27(3): 431
- Unnever, J. and Cullen, F. (2010). The social sources of Americans' punitiveness: A test of three competing models. *Criminology*, 40(1): 99
- Weaver, V. M. (2007). Frontlash: Race and the development of punitive crime policy. *Studies in American political development*, 21(2), 230-265.

- Zimring, F.E. 1996. Populism, democratic government, and the decline of expert authority: Some reflections on “three strikes” in California. *Pacific Law Journal*, 28, 243-256.
- Zimring, FE., Hawkins, G. & Kamin, S. (2001). *Punishment and democracy: Three strikes and you’re out in California*. New York: Oxford University Press. [Chapter 9]

SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Readings should be completed before class on the date they are listed below. This is a tentative schedule. Readings may be changed or added depending on how the course progresses.

Date	Topic	Assignments Due
Aug 29	Course Introduction	
Sep 5	Exploring the Punitive Turn: Social Structural and Cultural Change	Garland 2001
Sep 12	The Politics of Race and Crime Policy	Edsall and Edsall 1991 (esp. 53-78) Weaver 2007 Tonry 2010 Unnever & Cullen 2010
Sep 19	Elite Manipulation and Framing	Case Study Topic Due Beckett 1997 Ramirez 2013
Sep 26	Penal Populism Democracy at Work	Roberts et al 2002 (Chp 1,4,5) Enns 2016
Oct 3	Crime in Presidential Campaigns: 1988-2016	Case Study Outline #1 Due Jamison 1992 Hill and Marion 2017 TBA
Oct 10	No Class (Monday Classes Meet Today)	
Oct 17	Nature of Public Opinion on Crime Policy: Measurement, Misinformation & Malleability	Essay #1 Due Cullen, Fisher & Applegate 2000 Stalans 2002 Frost 2010 TBA
Oct 24	Sources of Crime Policy Attitudes at the Individual Level	Unnever et al 2009 Johnson 2008 Johnson 2009 Freiberg 2001
Oct 31	Crime and Politics at the State/Local Level	Case Study Outline #2 Due Campbell & Schoenfeld 2013 Brown 2011 TBA
Nov 7	California's Three Strikes Law	Documentary! Zimring 1996 Applegate et al 1996 Zimring, Hawkins & Kamin 2001

<i>Date</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Assignments Due</i>
Nov 14	<i>No Class – Work on Case Study</i>	
Nov 21	The Possibility of CJ Reform: Opportunities and Challenges	Percival 2011 Freiberg & Carson 2010 Thielo et al 2016 and commentaries Beckett, Reosti and Knaphus 2016 Gottlieb 2017
Nov 28	Student Presentations	<i>Case Study Paper & Presentation Due</i>
Dec 5	Student Presentations Wrap Up	
TBD (Dec 12?)		<i>Essay #2 Due</i>