

CRIM 415, GOVT 464-DL2: GUNS AND CRIME IN AMERICA
SPRING 2024 SYLLABUS

Class Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:00 pm-4:15pm

Class Location: Online

Professor: Dr. Christopher Koper, Professor

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Office Location: Room 316, Research Hall (Fairfax campus)

Office hours: Students may contact me by email as needed to set up appointments.

Graduate teaching assistant: Michael Goodier (mgoodier@gmu.edu)

COURSE SUMMARY

The goal of the course is to educate students about the issues surrounding gun ownership, gun crime, gun policies, and other efforts to reduce gun violence in American society. We will explore the social consequences of gun ownership and examine the extent and effectiveness of society's efforts to control gun violence, highlighting research on these issues and the implications of this research for informing public policy. The course will place a heavy emphasis on examining various policy and enforcement approaches to reducing gun crime. Topics covered in the class will include: the 2nd amendment and its interpretation; patterns and trends in gun ownership and gun violence (including mass shootings); the social costs and benefits of gun availability; federal and state gun regulations; the operations of illegal gun markets and efforts to disrupt them; efforts to suppress illegal gun use; the effectiveness of gun laws and other enforcement efforts to prevent gun violence and mass shootings; public opinion about gun control; and political aspects of the policymaking process.

COURSE WEBSITE

There is a Blackboard site for the course which has general information about the class, announcements, assignments, exams, and links to readings that are not available through the university's library system. Additionally, you can access this syllabus at the Blackboard site.

COURSE FORMAT AND GUIDELINES FOR CLASS DISCUSSION

Classes will meet online by Zoom. The instructor will provide students with a link to the Zoom meetings, which should not be shared with anyone not registered for the class. Please use earbuds or earphones during class meetings (otherwise, it causes feedback with the microphone on your laptop). Also, please use the "mute" option except when you are speaking.

Most class sessions will involve discussion of the assigned readings as well as an additional lecture on the class topic. The instructor will provide class handouts with outlines of new lecture material. These outlines will be posted on Blackboard prior to each class (by the morning of each class session if not earlier) under the "readings and outlines" section of the Blackboard site. Students are strongly encouraged to download these documents and add their own additional notes during class.

As described below, a reading questions assignment will be given for each class (under the “assignments” section of the Blackboard site). For class discussion of the reading questions, the instructor will assign each student to a discussion group. During each class session, the instructor will select one or more of the discussion groups to lead responses to the reading questions. When a student’s group is selected for discussion, the student is expected to join the discussion via audio and (preferably) video. At other times, students may raise questions or make comments by using the “raise hand” or chat functions.

To ensure that everyone has a good experience with in-class participation, please observe the following guidelines: prepare for class discussion by keeping current with the readings and assignments; have your readings and written assignments accessible to facilitate discussion (and to make additions and corrections to your answers based on the discussion); respect others by actively listening; feel free to ask questions; and give others a chance to speak.

EMAIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

REQUIRED READING

There is one book that is required for this course:

- *Reducing Gun Violence in America: Informing Policy with Evidence and Analysis*. (2013). Edited by Daniel W. Webster and Jon S. Vernick. The Johns Hopkins University Press.

The book may be purchased in hard copy from the university bookstore or accessed and downloaded freely as an e-book at <https://muse.jhu.edu/book/21475>. All other required course readings are available as documented below through the university’s online library system (e-journals), the course Blackboard site, or the internet. The library’s e-journal system can be accessed at <http://library.gmu.edu/>.

COURSE OUTLINE: DATES, TOPICS, AND ASSOCIATED READINGS

Please note carefully the assigned pages for each reading and the location where the reading can be obtained. Any changes to the readings and/or topics below will be announced by the instructor in advance of the assigned date(s).

SECTION 1: GUN OWNERSHIP AND GUN VIOLENCE

January 16: Course introduction and basics on firearms

- Course syllabus

January 18: The 2nd Amendment

- Supreme Court of the United States. *District of Columbia et al. v. Heller*. Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Pages 1-3 only (Syllabus). Available on Blackboard.
- Lawrence Rosenthal and Adam Winkler. The scope of regulatory authority under the Second Amendment (Chapter 18 of *Reducing Gun Violence*).

January 23: Patterns and trends in gun ownership

- Deborah Azrael, Lisa Hepburn, David Hemenway, and Matthew Miller, M. (2017). The stock and flow of US firearms: Results from the 2015 National Firearms Survey. *The Russell Sage Foundation Journal of the Social Sciences*, vol. 3, number 5, pages 38-46 only. Available on Blackboard and online: <https://www.rsfjournal.org/content/3/5/38>

January 25: Patterns and trends in gun violence

- Grace Kena and Jennifer L. Truman. (2022). *Trends and patterns in firearms violence, 1993-2018*. Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice. Pages 1-14 only. Available on Blackboard and online: <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/trends-and-patterns-firearm-violence-1993-2018#:~:text=The%20rate%20of%20nonfatal%20firearm,were%20committed%20with%20a%20firearm.>
- Devlin Barrett. (2020). 2020 saw an unprecedented spike in homicides from small cities to big towns. *The Washington Post*. Dec. 30, 2020. Available on Blackboard and online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/reoord-spike-murders-2020/2020/12/30/1dcb057c-4ae5-11eb-839a-cf4ba7b7c48c_story.html

January 30: Patterns and trends in mass shootings

- Adam Lankford and James Silver. (2020). Why have public mass shootings become more deadly? Assessing how perpetrators' motives and methods have changed over time. *Criminology & Public Policy*, vol. 19, issue 1, pages 37-60. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

February 1: Self-defensive gun use

- David Hemenway, D. Azrael, and M. Miller. (2000). Gun use in the United States: Results from two national surveys. *Injury Prevention*, vol. 6, pages 263-267. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

February 6: Effects of gun availability on individual and community safety

- Matthew Miller, Deborah Azrael, and David Hemenway. Firearms and violent death in the United States (Chapter 1 of *Reducing Gun Violence*).

February 8: Effects of gun availability on individual and community safety (continued)

February 13: Exam 1 (administered through Blackboard, class does not meet)

SECTION 2: GUN RESTRICTIONS AND GUN VIOLENCE

February 15: Regulating firearm types and features

- Christopher S. Koper. America's experience with the federal assault weapons ban, 1994-2004: Key findings and implications (Chapter 12 in *Reducing Gun Violence*).

February 20: Restrictions on who can own firearms

- Katherine Vittes, Daniel W. Webster, and Jon S. Vernick. Reconsidering the adequacy of current conditions on legal firearm ownership (Chapter 5 in *Reducing Gun Violence*).

February 22: Federal regulation of gun commerce

- "NICS & Reporting Procedures" section on the website of the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence: <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/gun-laws/policy-areas/background-checks/nics-reporting-procedures/>
- Jon S. Vernick and Daniel W. Webster. Curtailing dangerous sales practices by licensed firearms dealers (Chapter 10 of *Reducing Gun Violence*).

February 27: State regulation of gun commerce

- Read the following sections on the website of the Giffords Law Center to Prevent Gun Violence (go to <https://lawcenter.giffords.org/> and see under "gun laws"):
 - Licensing
 - Registration
 - Universal Background Checks
 - Waiting Periods

February 29: Effects of gun laws on illegal gun markets

- Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, Emma E. McGinty, and Ted Alcorn. Preventing the diversion of guns to criminals through effective firearms sales laws (Chapter 8 in *Reducing Gun Violence*).

March 5: Class does not meet (spring break)

March 7: Class does not meet (spring break)

March 12: Effects of gun laws on gun violence

- Michael Siegel, Molly Pahn, Ziming Xuan, Eric Fleegler, and David Hemenway. (2019). The impact of state firearm laws on homicide and suicide deaths in the USA, 1991-2016:

A panel study. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, vol. 34 (number 10), pages 2021-2028. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

- April M. Zeoli and Shannon Frattaroli. Evidence for optimism: Policies to limit batterers' access to guns (Chapter 4 in *Reducing Gun Violence*).

March 14: Regulating gun carrying

- N. Prabha Unnithan, Mark Pogrebin, Paul B. Stretesky, and Gerry Venor. (2008). Gun felons and gun regulation: Offenders' views about and reactions to "shall issue" policies for carrying concealed weapons. *Criminal Justice Policy Review*, Vol. 19, pages 196-214. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

March 19: Regulating gun carrying (continued) and gun laws wrap-up

March 21: Exam 2 (administered through Blackboard, class does not meet)

SECTION 3: PUNISHMENT AND ENFORCEMENT APPROACHES TO REDUCING GUN VIOLENCE

March 26: Punishing gun crime

- Cassandra K. Crifasi, Molly Merrill-Francis, Daniel W. Webster, Garen J. Wintemute, and Jon S. Vernick. (2018). Changes in the legal environment and enforcement of firearm transfer laws in Pennsylvania and Maryland. *Injury Prevention*.

March 28: The focused deterrence approach to preventing gun violence

- Jack McDevitt, Scott H. Decker, Natalie Kroovand Hipple, and Edmund F. McGarrell. (2006). *Project Safe Neighborhoods: Strategic Interventions. Offender Notification Meetings: Case Study 2*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Pages 1-15. Available on Blackboard and online:
https://www.bja.gov/Publications/Offender_Notification_Meetings.pdf

April 2: Law enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence (people-focused)

- Garen J. Wintemute, S. Frattaroli, B.E. Claire, K.A. Vittes, and D.W. Webster. (2014). Identifying armed respondents to domestic violence restraining orders and recovering their firearms: process evaluation of an initiative in California. *American Journal of Public Health*, vol. 104, number 2, pages e113-e118. Available through the library's e-journals.

April 4: Law enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence (place-focused)

- Lawrence W. Sherman, James W. Shaw, and Dennis P. Rogan. (1995). *The Kansas City Gun Experiment*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Pages 1-10. Available on Blackboard and on the internet at:
<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/kang.pdf>.

April 9: Law enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence (place-focused, continued)

- Christopher S. Koper, Jeffery Egge, and Cynthia Lum. (2015). Institutionalizing place-based approaches: Opening 'cases' on gun crime hot spots. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*, Vol. 9 (number 3), pages 242-254. Available through Blackboard and the library's e-journals.

April 11: Law enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence (supply-side)

Gun availability and police-related shootings

- Charles Callahan, Frederick Rivara, and Thomas Koepsell. (1996), Money for guns: an evaluation of the Seattle gun buy-back program. In *Under Fire: Gun Buy-Backs, Exchanges, and Amnesty Programs*, edited by Martha Plotkin. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum. Pages 81-92. Available on Blackboard.

SECTION 4: SPECIAL TOPICS IN PREVENTING GUN VIOLENCE

April 16: Extreme risk protection and gun violence restraining orders

- Garen J. Wintemute, Veronica A. Pear, Julia P. Schleimer, Rocco Pallin, Sydney Sohl, Nicole Kravitz-Wirtz, and Elizabeth A. Tomsich. (2019). Extreme risk protection orders intended to prevent mass shootings: a case series. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, vol. 171, pages 655-658 (also see appendix case summaries). Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

April 18: Community-based approaches to prevent gun violence

- Jeffrey A. Butts, Caterina Gouvis Roman, Lindsay Bostwick, and Jeremy R. Porter. (2015). Cure violence: A public health model to reduce gun violence. *Annual Review of Public Health*, vol. 36, pages 39-44 and 51-52 only. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.
- Jonathan Purtle, Rochelle Dicker, Carnell Cooper et al. (2013). Hospital-based violence intervention programs save lives and money. *Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery*, Vol. 75, Number 2, pages 331-333. Available on Blackboard and through the library's e-journals.

SECTION 5: PUBLIC OPINION, POLITICS, AND GUN POLICY

April 23: Public opinion on gun policy

- Emma E. McGinty, Daniel W. Webster, Jon S. Vernick, and Colleen L. Barry. Public opinion on proposals to strengthen gun laws (Chapter 19 of *Reducing Gun Violence*).

April 25: The politics of gun policy

- Robert J. Spitzer (2015). Political fury: Gun politics. Pages 91-136 in *The Politics of Gun Control* by Robert J. Spitzer (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers). [Available on Blackboard.](#)

Final exam: Date to be announced (exam will be administered through Blackboard)

COURSE GRADING, EXAMINATIONS, AND ASSIGNMENTS

Students' grades will be based on: 1) examinations; 2) assignments; and 3) class attendance and participation.

Examinations: There will be three examinations during the course. Each exam will have a combination of multiple choice, multiple answer, short answer, and short essay questions. The final exam will be cumulative but will emphasize material covered in sections three through five. The exams will be administered through Blackboard. Each exam will be posted online for a specified period of time, and students can take the exam at any point during that time period. Note that the exams will have time limits; once begun, students must finish an exam within the specified time limit. The instructor will provide the due date and time limit for each exam when it is distributed. Only under exceptional circumstances (e.g., over-night hospitalization, death in the immediate family during examination times) will extensions be given for completing exams.

Homework assignments: There will be a written assignment for each class posted on Blackboard. The assignment will have questions corresponding to the reading(s) assigned for that class. Unless otherwise instructed, students must submit written answers to the questions before class on the due date; anything turned in after the due date and time will be counted as late. Each question should be answered in full with responses provided in one or more paragraphs (with full sentences) as appropriate. Unless otherwise directed, students should submit their responses to the instructor and teaching assistant through Blackboard. The assignments will be graded on a full, partial, or zero credit basis depending on their completeness. Students may receive partial credit for complete assignments submitted late but within one day of the due date. No credit will be given for assignments submitted more than one day late. In compiling final grades, the instructor will drop each student's lowest homework score.

Class participation: The class participation component will be based on class participation and preparedness in answering reading questions.

The examinations, assignments, paper, and class attendance/participation components will be weighted as follows:

Examination 1:	25%
Examination 2:	25%
Examination 3:	25%
Assignments:	20%
Attendance / participation:	5%

The grading scale for the course will be:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
60-69%	D
Below 60	F

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all student members of the George Mason University community to pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee and result in failing the course. Further information about these matters is available at:

<https://catalog.gmu.edu/policies/honor-code-system/>.

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 Services (ODS) at 993-2474 (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with ODS and obtaining proper documentation to provide to the course instructor. Accommodations will only be provided to students who are registered with ODS.

ENROLLMENT INFORMATION

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Spring 2024 Academic Calendar on the website of the Office of the University Registrar (https://registrar.gmu.edu/calendars/spring_2024/).

The last day to add this course is January 23, 2024. The last day to drop this course with a full tuition refund is January 30, 2024. See the Spring 2024 Academic Calendar for deadlines and conditions for dropping a course after January 30, 2024.