

2008-2009 ADJ Honors Seminar Description

Prostitution and the Criminal Justice Response to Prostitution

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Prostitution can take many forms, from street-level prostitution to high priced-escort services. Prostitution involves U.S. citizens as well as foreign nationals. Many U.S. cities serve as entry points for women and children trafficked into the country for the purpose of forced prostitution. While clients of prostitutes are almost exclusively male; males, females and transgender individuals are all engaged in providing sexual services for pay. In addition to adults, a large share of people who engage in sex work begin doing so before the age of 18.

Washington D.C. is considered by many to have a large 'prostitution problem.' In addition to prostitution by U.S. citizens, it is believed to be a major entry point for people trafficked in the international sex-trade. In the last several years the Metropolitan Police Department has taken several steps in an attempt to crack-down on prostitution. These include expanding the ability of police officers to arrest people engaging in prostitution, the creation of 'prostitution-free zones', and the closing of loopholes in current prostitution laws. The honors seminar will conduct original research to both track trends in prostitution arrests in the District over the last several years, and to assess the opinions of different players in the field of prostitution to these changes in the criminal justice response to prostitution. What are their perspectives on whether the criminal justice response to prostitution is effective, fair, and legitimate? Do they see these practices as having similar affects on all types of people engaging in prostitution (juvenile/adult, male/female/transgender, domestic/foreign, street workers/call girls)? How have these practices impacted arrest rates for prostitution in the District?

POTENTIAL RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Students in the honors seminar will work with Dr. Agha over the period of a year designing and implementing a research project to explore these questions. We will produce a final research project that will involve an analysis and report on the data the class has collected. Students accepted into the honors seminar may be involved in the following activities:

1. Exploring the current literature to understand what is currently known about prostitution and various criminal justice responses to prostitution. This will facilitate the development of research questions and help to contextualize our project.
2. Designing and implementing surveys and/or interviews with various members of the community involved with prostitution, including police officers and other members of the criminal justice system and various members of prostitution outreach organizations (counselors, street based workers, hotline operators, peer educators, client advocates and others).
3. Collect, analyze and synthesis information collected for compilation into written and oral presentations.

OTHER INFORMATION

Students must have at least a 3.2 GPA to participate. Students who successfully complete ADJ 491/492 with a grade point average of 3.5 or above will receive the honors designation in Administration of Justice when they graduate. The seminar will meet on Mondays from 1:30 to 4:15 PM at the Prince William Campus, although some of the class seminars and meetings will be substituted with field work assignments.