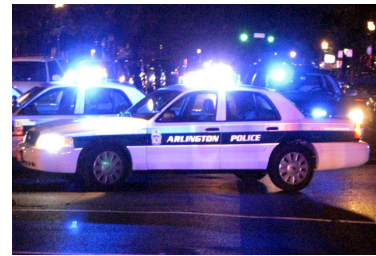


Bar Crawls and Drunken Brawls: Police-Community Partnerships to Reduce Alcohol-Related Crime

CRIM 491-492 Honors Seminar
George Mason University

2016-17



Course Overview

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.

Additional Information

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. This seminar will meet on Wednesdays from 10:30am-1:10pm in the Fall semester (day/time for the Spring semester to be confirmed) on the Fairfax campus. There will also be opportunities for meetings outside the classroom. General information on the Honors program is available at <http://cls.gmu.edu/undergraduate/honors-research>. If you are interested in registering for this course, please email Dr. Gill at cgill9@gmu.edu.

About the Instructor



Dr. Charlotte Gill is an Assistant Professor at George Mason University and Deputy Director of the Center for Evidence-Based Crime Policy in the Department of Criminology, Law and Society. She received her PhD in Criminology in 2010 from the University of Pennsylvania and her undergraduate and masters degrees in Law and Criminology respectively from Cambridge University in the UK. Her primary research interests are community-based crime prevention and place-based approaches, particularly with juveniles and youth; community policing; mixed-methods program evaluation; and research synthesis. Dr. Gill has over ten years of experience in applied experimental and quasi-experimental research. She is currently involved in a number of participatory action research projects focused on youth crime prevention, community policing, and improving law enforcement responses to individuals with mental illness, working with police departments and community organizations around the United States including Appalachian Kentucky, Arlington County (VA), Brooklyn Park (MN), Roanoke County (VA), Seattle and Shoreline (WA).