CRIM 511—EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME & JUSTICE POLICY
Spring 2019

Dr. Charlotte Gill | Department of Criminology, Law and Society, George Mason University
Mondays 7:20–10:00pm | Mason Global Center 1320A, Fairfax Campus

✉ cgill9@gmu.edu | ☎ (703) 993-6085 | ⌂ Research Hall 317 (office hours by appointment)

Course Description

In this course we will examine the role that science and research play in criminal justice agencies, policies, and practices. We will review the evidence-base for the effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency of key approaches and strategies; critically examine the evidence-based policy framework; and learn how research is applied and translated to the policy and practice arenas. The goal of this course is to prepare you to effectively and thoughtfully implement evidence-based practices within a criminal justice agency.

Credit Hours: 3.

Course Objectives

On completion of this course you should be able to:

- Summarize the goals, objectives, and key principles of evidence-based crime policy;

- Discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the evidence-based policy framework;

- Evaluate the evidence-base for key crime and justice policies and practices;

- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches;

- Synthesize knowledge about effective and ineffective approaches and apply this knowledge to real-world cases.

Required Text

Blomberg, T. G., Brancale, J. M., Beaver, K. M., & Bales, W. D. (Eds.). (2016). *Advancing criminology and criminal justice policy*. New York, NY: Routledge

You will need to obtain this book before classes start to complete the reading assignment for Week 1. **If you have any difficulties getting hold of a copy—financial issues, availability of book etc—please contact me ASAP.** Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard. Weekly reading assignments are listed under Tentative Course Schedule and Reading Assignments starting on page 3.

Course Format

This course will be taught in a primarily student-led discussion seminar format. This approach relies heavily on you completing the assigned readings before class and coming prepared to discuss them. The purpose of the classes is to clarify issues that arise in the reading, assess important questions and controversies, and develop your own critical thinking through discussion and questions. When all students commit to actively participating, everybody benefits and maximizes their learning and understanding of the material. We will discuss strategies for effective reading techniques in the first class.

There is a huge amount of material within this topic area that is impossible to cover in-depth in a single semester. I have tried to cover the key issues and readings as comprehensively as possible, but my selection of material should not be taken as an indication that I do not value other areas. Later in the semester I have scheduled a "wildcard week" where you will lead the selection of topics—in this class we can get into greater depth about an area we have already covered, or explore a new issue.

Course Requirements and Student Evaluation

- **Students as Experts** (up to 20 points) All students are expected to attend class and actively participate in discussions. Each week two or three students will be asked to do an additional reading and lead a class discussion for this portion of the grade. We will discuss the format and grading of this assignment in more detail in the first class.

- **Group Project and Presentation** (up to 40 points) Students will work in groups to complete a course project that applies the material we have learned to a real-world crime problem. We will collaborate with the WMATA (DC Metro) Police Department for this project. This project develops and assesses students' skills in synthesizing and applying the course material. Time will be made available for group project work during class sessions. Students will be evaluated on their participation in the group as well as the quality of the overall presentation. Full instructions and grading rubrics will be posted on Blackboard early in the semester. You will present to classmates and police department representatives in the final class session (May 6).

- **Policy Analysis Paper** (up to 40 points) This assignment allows you to explore evidence and implementation issues for a program or policy of your choice. The paper will be no more than 10 pages and includes three sections: (1) an analysis of the problem that the program or policy is supposed to address; (2) a review of current practice and evidence; and (3) recommendations to practitioners and/or policymakers. To help you manage your work across the semester, the assignment is broken up into four parts. An initial proposal and outline will be due on **February 25**, a draft of section 1 on **March 25**, revised section 1 and draft section 2 on **April 22**, and the full paper by **May 13**. I will review and provide feedback on each section within a week of submission. Full instructions and grading rubrics will be posted on Blackboard early in the semester.

Letter grades for this course will be based on the following points breakdown, according to the Graduate Regular scale:

A+	97-100	A	93-96.9	A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9	B	83-86.9	B-	80-82.9
C	70-79.9	F	< 70		

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The weekly schedule is subject to change depending on the progress of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. **Required reading assignments should be completed *before* the class for which they are listed.**

Please see page 5 for a full reference list of class readings. All readings that are not from the required text will be posted on Blackboard.

Class	Date	Content & Readings
	Jan 21	NO CLASS (Martin Luther King Day)
1	Jan 28	**What is evidence-based policy?** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 1, 3, and 33
2	Feb 4	**How do we know if it works?** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 2 • Read Sherman et al. (1998) (focus on pp.1-6, skim the rest) • Read Farrington (2003) • Read Weisburd, Lum, and Petrosino (2001)
3	Feb 11	**Synthesizing evidence** • Read Weisburd et al. (2017) • Read Chalmers (2003) • Read Snilstveit, Vojtkova, Bhavsar, Stevenson, and Gaarder (2016)
4	Feb 18	**Evidence vs. experience** • Read Willis (2013) • Read Weisburd and Neyroud (2011) • Read Sparrow (2011)
5	Feb 25	**Evidence-based crime prevention** PROPOSED POLICY ANALYSIS TOPIC DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 5-8
6	Mar 4	**Evidence-based policing** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 9-11 • Read Sherman (1998) • Read Lum, Koper, and Telep (2011)
	Mar 11	NO CLASS (Spring Break)
7	Mar 18	**Evidence-based courts and sentencing** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 12-15
8	Mar 25	**Evidence-based incarceration policy** POLICY ANALYSIS PART I DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 19-20, 29 • Read Fernandes and Crutchfield (2018)
9	Apr 1	**Evidence-based corrections** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 17-18 • Read Lipsey and Cullen (2007) • Read Latessa, Cullen, and Gendreau (2002)

Class	Date	Content & Readings
10	Apr 8	**Evidence-based reentry** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 21-23 • Read Travis (2014)
11	Apr 15	**It works… but is it cost-effective?** • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 31 • Read Marsh, Chalfin, and Roman (2008) • Read Mallender and Tierney (2016)
12	Apr 22	**How do we translate the research into practice?** POLICY ANALYSIS PART II DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM • Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 4 • Read Lum (2009) • Read Pesta, Blomberg, Ramos, and Ranson (2018) • Read Przybylski (2015)
13	Apr 29	***Wildcard Week!*** • Readings TBC
14	May 6	**Final presentations**
	May 13	**FINAL POLICY ANALYSIS PAPER DUE ON BLACKBOARD BY 5:00PM** • There is no final exam in this class

References

Blomberg, T. G., Brancale, J. M., Beaver, K. M., & Bales, W. D. (Eds.). (2016). *Advancing criminology and criminal justice policy*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Chalmers, I. (2003). Trying to do more good than harm in policy and practice: The role of rigorous, transparent, up-to-date evaluations. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *589*(1), 22–40. doi:10.1177/0002716203254762

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Latessa, E. J., Cullen, F. T., & Gendreau, P. (2002). Beyond correctional quackery: Professionalism and the possibility of effective treatment. *Federal Probation*, *66*(2), 43–49.

Lipsey, M. W., & Cullen, F. T. (2007). The effectiveness of correctional rehabilitation: A review of systematic reviews. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science*, *3*(1), 297–320. doi:10.1146/annurev.lawsocsci.3.081806.112833

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Pesta, G. B., Blomberg, T. G., Ramos, J., & Ranson, J. W. A. (2018, November 29). Translational criminology: Toward best practice. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*. doi:10.1007/s12103-018-9467-1

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Sherman, L. W., Gottfredson, D. C., MacKenzie, D. L., Eck, J., Reuter, P., & Bushway, S. D. (1998). *Preventing crime: What works, what doesn't, what's promising* (No. NCJ 171676). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs. gov/pdffiles/171676.pdf

Snilstveit, B., Vojtkova, M., Bhavsar, A., Stevenson, J., & Gaarder, M. (2016). Evidence & Gap Maps: A tool for promoting evidence informed policy and strategic research agendas. *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, *79*, 120–129. doi:10.1016/j.jclinepi.2016.05.015

Sparrow, M. K. (2011). *Governing science*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/232179.pdf

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Weisburd, D., Farrington, D. P., Gill, C., Ajzenstadt, M., Bennett, T., Bowers, K., … Wooditch, A. (2017). What works in crime prevention and rehabilitation: An assessment of systematic reviews. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *16*(2), 415–449. doi:10.1111/1745-9133.12298

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Willis, J. J. (2013). *Improving police: What's craft got to do with it?* (No. 16). Police Foundation. Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.policefoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/IAP16_Willis_2 .pdf

Course Policies and Resources

Course Policies

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 511" 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.
- My office hours are by appointment. Please feel free to email me or speak to me during class to set up a time. **I will only discuss grades and make-up requests during face-to-face meetings.**

Classroom Conduct

- Please respect your instructor and classmates by coming to class on time and prepared, and by actively listening to others.
- Use of laptops, tablets, and cellphones is encouraged at certain times during class to look up information and contribute to discussions. However, students who use technology for non-class related activities and/or disrupt the learning of others will be asked to stop using devices and may be asked to leave the classroom.
- 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 you feel comfortable discussing their ideas, experiences, and opinions. This does not mean we avoid difficult subjects. I encourage **respectful** debate and disagreement, and you should always feel free to challenge what I say. I expect you to be considerate of the viewpoints and privacy of others.

Missed Assignments or Exams

I understand that emergencies arise and will consider extension or make-up requests on a case-by-case basis. In return I expect you to contact me as soon as possible and preferably in advance if you have a problem, **be honest about your situation**, and do everything you can to meet the deadline or requirements before requesting any special consideration.

Academic Integrity and the Mason Honor Code

You are expected to abide by the Honor Code, which prohibits lying, cheating, stealing, and plagiarizing, among other issues. Please see https://oai.gmu.edu/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 Mason 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 in all written work and presentations and submit your own work (or collaborative work created by your own group) for graded assignments. To help you comply with the Honor Code I will provide an overview of proper citation practices and will include detailed information about my expectations in the instructions for each assignment (also see the Resources section below). If you have any doubt as to whether you are in compliance with the Honor Code, always ask me.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who needs academic accommodations, please contact Disability Services (http://ds.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.

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 Academic Calendar, available from the Registrar's website (http://registrar.gmu.edu).The last day to add this class is **January 29**. The last day to drop without a tuition penalty is **February 5** (the final drop deadline is February 12; see the Academic Calendar for details of the tuition penalty percentage). After the final deadline, 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.

Resources

Blackboard

Visit https://doit.gmu.edu/students/course-tools/blackboard-courses/ if you need help using Blackboard. Walk-in assistance is available at the Collaborative Learning Hub (CLUB), 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 support for international students. See http://ulife.gmu.edu/home/offices-of-university-life/ for a full listing of service areas and contact information.

Notice of Mandatory Reporting of Sexual Assault, Interpersonal Violence, and Stalking

As a faculty member, I am designated as a "Responsible Employee," and must report all disclosures of sexual assault, interpersonal violence, and stalking to Mason's Title IX Coordinator per University Policy 1412. If you wish to speak with someone confidentially, please contact one of Mason's confidential resources, such as Student Support and Advocacy Center (SSAC) at (703) 380-1434 or Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (703) 993-2380. You may also seek assistance from Mason's Title IX Coordinator by calling (703) 993-8730, or emailing titleix@gmu.edu.