

SOCIAL INEQUALITY, CRIME AND JUSTICE

CRIM 307, Section 002

Fall 2019

INSTRUCTOR

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-4pm or by appt (email to confirm)

LECTURE

Tues and Thurs, 1:30pm-2:45pm

Krug Hall 210

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the interactive relationship between racial/ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic inequality and criminal justice policy, practice, and outcomes. We will examine disparities in criminal justice processes and outcomes, discuss how experiences with and perceptions of the justice system vary across social groups, and explore the consequences of these patterns. Throughout the semester, we will focus on contemporary issues in policing, courts, and corrections that have received significant attention from researchers, policymakers, and the public, and which underlie current efforts to reform the criminal justice system and reduce inequality.

At the conclusion of the course students will be able to draw on social science research and theory to: 1) describe public (mis)perceptions of crime, criminals, and the justice system; 2) discuss disparities in criminal justice processing and outcomes, 3) describe specific ways that the justice system re(produces) inequality; 4) critically consider specific ways that race and ethnicity influence the administration of justice in U.S. society; and 5) identify opportunities to reform the justice system to reduce disparities and social inequality.

COURSE FORMAT AND EXPECTATIONS

Class meetings will include lecture, interactive questions and discussion, activities, and videos. Class lectures will not merely re-cap the reading material but expand upon it. Regular class attendance and student participation is essential to the success of this class overall.

We will cover issues that some students may feel are sensitive or controversial. Your peers may have different perspectives and experiences related to these topics than you (or the instructor), and views may be strongly held. Consistent with Mason's emphasis on diversity and inclusion, I expect everyone in the course to be respectful of others and to be open to learning. I encourage you to speak thoughtfully, listen carefully, and be self-reflective. Class will be a place where we can respectfully discuss opposing viewpoints and offer differing perspectives while focusing on the social scientific evidence.

To avoid disrupting your peers and/or the instructor, please keep your cell phone on vibrate or silent and do not access the Internet during class on your laptop or smartphone unless approved by the instructor. Laptops should only be used to take notes or access course-related materials; please do not use electronic devices to email, chat, text, game, shop, etc. when class is in session.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

All required books are available on 2-hour reserve at the Mason Library.

- 1) Cobbina, Jennifer. (2019). *Hands Up, Don't Shoot: Why the Protests in Ferguson and Baltimore Matter, and How They Changed America*. New York University Press. ISBN: 9781479874415
- 2) Edelman, Peter. (2019). *Not a Crime to Be Poor: The Criminalization of Poverty in America*. The New Press. ISBN: 9781620975480
- 3) Johnson, D., Warren, P. & Farrell, A. (2015). *Deadly Injustice: Trayvon Martin, Race, and the Criminal Justice System*. New York University Press. ISBN: 9781479894291
- 4) Western, Bruce. (2018). *Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation Press. ISBN: 9780871549556

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT EVALUATION

- 1) Class Participation (10% of final grade): Class participation (for lectures beginning Sept 5 through Nov 26) will be earned by attendance, participating in class discussions, and completing in-class exercises. Each class will be worth .5% toward the final course grade. In-class activities will be varied and may be individual or group exercises. Arriving late, leaving early, or using unapproved technology is disruptive to the instructor and your peers and may affect your participation grade. Students may miss two class sessions without any impact on their participation grade; no excuse is required.
- 2) Homework Assignments (30% of final grade): Twelve homework assignments will be available over the course of the semester via Blackboard; students must complete ten of them (each worth 3% of the final course grade). These assignments may include reading reviews, internet exercises, listening to podcasts, short answer questions, etc. If a student completes more than ten homework assignments, the ten highest scores will count toward the final grade.
- 3) Midterm Assessment (20% of final grade): The midterm will be a take-home assignment based on material from the first half of the course. It will be distributed a week before it is due. The format is yet to be determined; the assignment may include a mix of question types (e.g. multiple choice, short answer, short essay), or it may involve a longer essay.
- 4) Writing Assignments (40% of final grade): Two short papers will be required, each worth 20% of the final course grade. These papers will be approximately 1,000 words (about 3 double-spaced pages) and will require students to demonstrate their knowledge of the course material and apply it to contemporary issues. Detailed instructions will be provided for each assignment.

Class Participation:	10%
Homework:	30%
Midterm:	20%
Paper #1:	20%
<u>Paper #2:</u>	<u>20%</u>
Total:	100%

Final grades in the course will be based on the following breakdown:

Points	Percentage	Grade
186-200	93-100%	A
180-185	90-92.5%	A-
174-179	87-89.5%	B+
166-173	83-86.5%	B
160-165	80-82.5%	B-
154-159	77-79.5%	C+
146-153	73-76.5%	C
140-146	70-72.5%	C-
130-139	65-69.5%	D
0-129	0-64.5%	F

ASSIGNMENT POLICIES

Detailed guidelines for all assignments will be posted on Blackboard. All assignments must be submitted via Blackboard. Students must contact the instructor ahead of time if they cannot complete an assignment by the due date (in the case of an emergency, contact the instructor as soon as you are able). Late or e-mailed assignments will only be accepted in extraordinary circumstances, with appropriate documentation, and at the discretion of the instructor. Late assignments may receive a grading penalty. If your final course grade is borderline, consistent class participation may help bump you up to the next grade.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are a student with a disability and need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office. See <http://ds.gmu.edu/> for more information.

BLACKBOARD AND COURSE COMMUNICATION

The course syllabus, lecture notes, homework assignments, additional reading assignments, and important announcements will be posted on Blackboard. Homework assignments will be submitted via Blackboard. To login, go to: <http://mymason.gmu.edu>, click on the Courses tab, and locate the link to CRIM 307 in your course list. For technical assistance, go to: <http://coursesupport.gmu.edu/Students/>.

Changes to the course schedule, reading assignments, and other important information will be announced during class, on Blackboard, or 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 do my best to reply to emails within two business days (but usually sooner).

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE MASON 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 (<https://oai.gmu.edu/mason-honor-code/>). **All graded work for this class (including homework assignments and papers) must be completed *independently* (do not work with or compare answers with anyone else).** 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. 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. 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.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course schedule subject to change due to university closings or at the instructor's discretion. Changes to the schedule or assignments will be announced in class, sent via email, and/or posted on Blackboard. Additional readings may be assigned as the course proceeds. *Readings and assignments should be completed before class on the date they are listed unless otherwise indicated.*

Date	Topic	Assigned Reading Due	Assignments Due
Week 1			
Tue, Aug 27	Instructor and Course Introduction		
Thu, Aug 29	Student Introductions	Johnson et al, Chapter 1	
Week 2			
Tue, Sep 3	Crime Statistics and Stereotypes		
Thu, Sep 5	Crime Statistics and Stereotypes Participation Credit Begins	Johnson et al, Chapter 2	HW #1 due by 1:30pm
Week 3			
Tue, Sep 10	Crime Statistics and Stereotypes		
Thu, Sep 12	Crime Statistics and Stereotypes	Johnson et al, Chapter 4	HW #2 due by 1:30pm

Week 4			
Tue, Sep 17	Racialized Mass Incarceration	“13 th ” Documentary	
Thu, Sep 19	Racialized Mass Incarceration	“13 th ” Documentary	HW #3 due on Fri, Sep 20 by 11:59pm
Week 5			
Tue, Sep 24	Punishing the Poor	Edelman, Chapter 1	
Thu, Sep 26	Punishing the Poor: Homelessness	Edelman, Chapter 8	HW #4 due by 1:30pm
Week 6			
Tue, Oct 1	No Class Today		
Thu, Oct 3	Punishing the Poor: Public Benefits	Edelman, Chapter 6	HW #5 due by 1:30pm
Week 7			
Tue, Oct 8	Inequality in the Courts: Money Bail	Edelman, Chapter 3	
Thu, Oct 10	Inequality in the Courts: Fines and Fees	DOJ Report on Ferguson	HW #6 due by 1:30pm
Week 8			
Tue, Oct 15	No Class (Monday Classes Meet Today)		Midterm due by 11:59pm
Thu, Oct 17	Inequality in Policing	Cobbina, Intro & Chapter 1 (skim Appendix B)	
Week 9			
Tue, Oct 22	Inequality in Policing: Ferguson and Baltimore	Cobbina, Chapter 2	
Thu, Oct 24	Inequality in Policing: Ferguson and Baltimore	Cobbina, Chapter 3	HW #7 due by 1:30pm

Week 10			
Tue, Oct 29	Consequences of Inequality in Policing and the Courts	Cobbina, Chapters 4 & 5	
Thu, Oct 31	Consequences of Inequality in Policing and the Courts	Cobbina, Chapter 6 (skim)	HW #8 due by 1:30pm
Week 11			
Tue, Nov 5	No Class Today		Paper #1 due by 11:59pm
Thu, Nov 7	Inequality and Re-Entry	Homeward, Chapters 1 & 3 (skim Chapter 2)	HW #9 due by 1:30pm
Week 12			
Tue, Nov 12	Inequality and Re-Entry	Homeward, Chapters 5 & 6	
Thu, Nov 14	No Class Today		HW #10 due by 1:30pm
Week 13			
Tue, Nov 19	Inequality and Re-Entry	Homeward, Chapter 9	
Thu, Nov 21	Justice System Reform	Homeward, Chapter 11 Edelman, Chapter 9	HW #11 due by 1:30pm
Week 14			
Tue, Nov 26	Justice System Reform	Cobbina, Conclusion Edelman, Chp 10 (skim)	HW #12 due by 1:30pm
Thu, Nov 28	No Class Today (Thanksgiving Holiday)		
Week 15			
Tue, Dec 3	Topic TBA		Paper #2 due by 11:59pm
Thu, Dec 5	Course Wrap Up		