

Social Inequality, Crime, and Justice: Fall 2019
George Mason University
Synchronous Online (Wednesdays: 11 am to 12:15 pm)
Instructor: Dr. Andrew Novak

Objectives of the Course

This course will explore the significance of social inequality (especially race and gender inequality) for several crime and criminal justice issues. We will also examine variations in criminal offending and victimization, and explores disparities in criminal justice processing. We will ask two questions: (1) to what extent does our criminal justice system preserve a certain racial hierarchy; and (2) to what extent does our criminal justice system police certain sexual stereotypes, roles, and behaviors? We will analyze both international and domestic case studies in exploring the link between criminal justice, race, and sex. Issues such as policing, mass incarceration, sex offender registries, immigration detention, privatization, and the death penalty will be explored in class in greater detail.

At the conclusion of the course, students should be able to draw on social science theory to describe public perceptions of criminal justice, explain how social inequality leads to different rates of offending and victimization, discuss specific ways the justice system promotes inequality, and identify and critically consider specific ways that race and sex influence the administration of justice.

About the Instructor

I am a term assistant professor of criminology, law, and society at George Mason University. My research is primarily international and comparative in nature, focusing on the death penalty, clemency, comparative constitutional law, and international criminal law. I have a Master of Science in African Politics from the London School of Oriental and African Studies, a Juris Doctor from Boston University, and a Ph.D. in law from Middlesex University in London. I am licensed to practice law in New York and Washington, DC.

Email: anovak2@gmu.edu

Office Hours

I am available in person on Thursdays from 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm. I am available online on Wednesdays after class, from 12:15 pm to 12:30 pm, or by appointment. Office: Enterprise Hall, Room 345

Required Materials

Two books are required for this course:

Race, Crime, and Justice: The Continuing American Dilemma by Stephen E. Barkan (Oxford University Press, 2019).

The War on Sex by David M. Halperin and Trevor Hoppe, eds. (Duke University Press, 2017).

Grading Criteria

Your grade is based on the following components:

50% Weekly online quizzes

12 quizzes in total, but I will drop everyone's lowest grade, so this grade is based on 11 online quizzes.

50% Assignments

10% first paragraph/page/outline of research paper
20% final research paper
20% online video presentation about research topic

Below is the grading scale used for the course. I will not use the grades "D+" or "D-."

98-100	A+
93-97	A
90-92	A-
88-89	B+
83-87	B
80-82	B-
78-79	C+
73-77	C
70-72	C-
60-69	D
<60	F

In addition, in the event that I must calculate grade fractions, I will always round up to the next highest point if you have a 0.45 or higher.

Minimum Attendance Policy

This course is both synchronous and asynchronous. As a result, it has a minimum online attendance policy. We meet online ELEVEN times over the course of the fall semester, not including the introduction period the first week.

You must attend the online Blackboard Collaborate sessions **at least SIX times**, or your final grade will be lowered by a flat five points. I do not count absences, only attendances. As a result there is no such thing as an "excused absence" – there are only attendances and absences. However, attendance via conference call (instead of via Blackboard Collaborate) counts as an attendance.

If you attend the online Blackboard Collaborate sessions at least **EIGHT times**, I will drop your second lowest quiz grade.

The asynchronous portion of this class is not self-paced. That means that the required work must be completed by the deadlines in the syllabus or the late policies will apply.

I reserve the right to award only partial attendance to students who do not stay on the webinars (or conference call lines) for a critical mass of the class period. Blackboard logs when a student enters and leaves the webinar, and I will notice when students do not participate and routinely leave early. On the other hand, I understand some students will have internet connection problems—this is normal and expected.

Late Paper/Project Policy

A course incomplete may be given to students who have not completed the writing or video assignments for this course in time for final grades, with excused absences. Late papers or projects will be subject to a grade reduction without an appropriate excuse.

Discussion Board

For each of the six webinars, I have created a discussion thread for you to share stories related to that topic. These stories can be news articles, YouTube videos, podcasts, long form journalism, autobiographical writings, etc. At the beginning of every class, I will share the stories that were posted. **Every student must post on the discussion board ONCE over the course of the semester.** You must post on a topic *before* the relevant webinar; the deadlines are listed on Blackboard. No discussion board posts will count if they are made after the last webinar.

The stories may not be personal accounts or interviews that you have written yourself. Personal accounts or interviews constitute research on human subjects, which requires ethical approval from the University, even in undergraduate courses.

Make-up Quiz Policy

Students will have to take a quiz every week on Blackboard. The quizzes are *not timed* and *do not need to be completed at one time*. You will be able to see all questions at the same time. Therefore, ordinarily no extensions will be given.

Students who are unable to take a quiz for a good reason should alert me before I reveal the answers the following week in class. In extraordinary circumstances, I can allow a student to take a quiz late *so long as I have not released the answers to the class*.

If a student is unable to take a quiz and I have already released the answers to the class, I may allow a student to complete a portion of the quiz for partial credit (typically, the short answer portion of the quiz only). This is entirely within my discretion.

A Note on Respect

So long as a student's online participation is genuine, respectful, and relevant, it is worthy of respect by classmates and myself. We may have different perspectives and experiences, and I hope and expect that all students will express these disagreements openly and honestly. Listening is just as important as speaking. However, harassment of any kind or efforts to make other students uncomfortable is strictly prohibited. The topics we discuss in class are potentially controversial. We should be able to discuss opposing viewpoints within the context of social science evidence. At the same time, I will (and I hope everyone will) avoid deliberately provoking classmates.

In this class, we may also discuss a host of topics that relate explicitly to sex. Students who are uncomfortable talking about such topics do not have to participate in the discussion. I expect that students will avoid revealing information about themselves or other students that is personal, and we should also avoid inquiring into other peoples' personal lives. We will talk about these issues in a hypothetical and abstract way in class to avoid distraction and potential embarrassment.

Reading Assignments and Schedule of Classes

Wednesday, August 28

Topic: Introduction to the course and the topic

Workshops (during class): "Thanksgiving dinner" discussion, Multiculturalism scenarios

Wednesday, September 4

Topic: The racial and sexual origins of our criminal justice system

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 323-337 (on anti-sex origins of California's "anti-human trafficking" law)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Introduction to critical criminology, (2) Sex panic and harm reduction

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the readings and videos

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Lusotropicalism, Native Hawaiian discussion, Careers/internships in criminal justice reform, Nazi Germany discussion

Assignment Due: Take Introductory Survey on Blackboard by 11 am

Wednesday, September 11

Topic: The myth of "colorblindness"

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Barkan**, Chapter 1 (on race, crime, and justice); **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 229-241 (on anti-gay origins of sexual psychopathy laws)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Myth of colorblindness, (2) Perceptions of crime and criminality

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Affirmative action/university admissions scenarios, Parable on discretion, Workshop on crime rates and lead poisoning

Wednesday, September 18

Topic: Choosing what to criminalize

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 347-351 (on HIV criminalization); **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 126-164 (on sex offender laws)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Overcriminalization, and (2) HIV criminalization

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): HIV criminalization workshop, Schoolteacher scenario, Writing workshop

Wednesday, September 25

Topic: Inequality in policing

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Barkan**, Chapter 2 (on public opinion); **Barkan**, Chapter 5 (on policing)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Policing, (2) Media coverage and crime

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **in class**): Policing scenarios, Gun control workshop

Wednesday, October 2

CLASS CANCELLED: No work is due! ☹️

Wednesday, October 9

Topic: Unequal prosecution

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 429-447 (on Louisiana's "Crimes Against Nature" law); **Barkan**, Chapter 4 (on victims of crime)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Prosecution, (2) Hate crimes

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Blue lives matter laws, Prosecutor scenarios, Merger doctrine workshop

Wednesday, October 16

Topic: Inequalities in the courtroom

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 297-314 (on feminism and stereotypes of sex workers); **Barkan**, Chapter 3 (on criminal behavior)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) In the courtroom, (2) Jury selection

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Sexual orientation in jury selection

Assignment Due: First Paragraph/Page/Draft of Your Research Paper is Due at 11 am

Wednesday, October 23

Topic: Inequality in sentencing

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Barkan**, Chapter 6 (on race, prosecution, and punishment)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Sentencing disparities, (2) Parole

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Larry Krasner DA workshop

Wednesday, October 30

Topic: Mass incarceration

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 191-206 (on prohibition of sexual conduct in prison); **The New Jim Crow** essay by Michelle Alexander, to be distributed in class (4 pages)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Mass incarceration, (2) Prison conditions

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **in class**): Coming up with a research question

Wednesday, November 6

Topic: Collateral consequences

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 65-93 (on legal disabilities for sex offenders)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Collateral consequences, (2) Civil asset forfeiture

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **during class**): Article on Bernie Madoff and case for civil asset forfeiture; voter disenfranchisement discussion

Wednesday, November 13

Topic: Wrongful convictions and the death penalty

Readings (to be completed **before** class): *New Yorker* article “Trial By Fire” (on Blackboard)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Wrongful convictions, (2) Death penalty

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

In-class workshops (to be completed **in class**): Death penalty scenarios, Videos on wrongful executions and discussion

Assignment Due: **Take Death Penalty Survey on Blackboard by 11 am**

Wednesday, November 20

CLASS CANCELLED (But work is still due!)

Topic: Crimmigration/Migration and crime

Readings (to be completed **before** 11 am): **Barkan**, Chapter 7 (on future of race and crime)

Online videos (to be completed **before** 11 am): (1) Introduction to U.S. immigration law, (2) Undocumented immigration, (3) Immigration enforcement, (4) Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)

Online quiz (to be completed **before** 11 am): On the videos and readings

Wednesday, November 27

Thanksgiving Break: No class, and no work! ☺

Wednesday, December 4

Topic: Going Global/Juvenile justice

Readings (to be completed **before** class): **Halperin/Hoppe**, pages 409-428 (on anti-LGBT sentiment in Jamaica)

Online videos (to be completed **before** class): (1) Going Global, (2) Juvenile justice

Online quiz (to be completed **before** class): On the videos and readings

Workshops (to be completed **in class**): Handout on private prisons in New Zealand; immigration scenarios; law enforcement and immigration

Assignment Due: Final Research Paper Due at 11 am; Submit on Blackboard

Wednesday, December 11

Assignment Due: Final video projects must be uploaded to Blackboard by 11:59 pm

Paper Guidance

This course will have writing assignments over the course of the semester. The instructions for these assignments will be circulated shortly. Your grade is based on **how you write**, so **it is essential** to focus on grammar, presentation, conciseness, and clarity of writing. The papers are not long, but I will read every word, so every word should be selected carefully.

The paper should cite a minimum of three sources, of which two should be scholarly. A paper based solely on unsupported assertions may receive a reduced grade. I will provide instructions and conduct a series of writing workshops.

The papers should be submitted in Word format on Blackboard. I will track changes on Microsoft Word and upload the paper back to Blackboard. If you do not have Microsoft Word, you *may* submit your paper in PDF and I will copy and paste it to Microsoft Word myself. This will ruin your formatting, but we don't have any other choice. Note that although converting a file to PDF strips out the metadata, it *does not fool the plagiarism software on Blackboard*. The plagiarism software can read PDFs.

Introduction to Online Video Presentations

This course will require an online video presentation, using PowerPoint or a related program. You are required to present for 3 minutes. Presentations that exceed or fall under 3 minutes, give or take 15 seconds, will be subject to a markdown. Students who use a free version of PowerPoint or who use PowerPoint on an Apple computer should know that the software may be limited or have bugs in it when converting it to a video file. Plan accordingly.

The topic of the presentation will be to present on an issue relating to social inequality and criminal justice. The presentation should (briefly) address the topic, provide some criminological data, and use visuals to help tell the story. Sample topics might include, for instance, race and the

death penalty, sentencing disparities, policing, overcriminalization, felon disenfranchisement, and other topics.

Ideally, the presentation will be submitted as a PowerPoint file with embedded audio files that can be played automatically in slideshow mode, OR exported from PowerPoint as a video file (.mp4) and uploaded to Blackboard. Unfortunately, I cannot accept Keynote or Prezi presentations unless these have been converted to video files. (While it is possible to convert Keynote to PowerPoint, doing this strips out the audio files). Students who wish to upload the presentation to YouTube may do this instead, but this is public.

The grading rubric will include six criteria: (1) bibliography; (2) technical aspects, including length; (3) visual presentation; (4) audio presentation; (5) how well visuals work with audio; and (6) strength of criminological or legal data presented.

Honor Code Policy

Available on the web at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All graded course work must be done independently. You are bound by the George Mason University Honor Code. Violations will be referred to the University Honors Committee. You may collaborate with other students in studying and discussing course topics, but your written course work must be entirely your own.

ALL STUDENTS ARE ON NOTICE THAT I CONSIDER PAPER RECYCLING FROM ANOTHER COURSE TO BE A VIOLATION OF THE HONOR CODE. This is, in part, because I use the Blackboard "Safe Assign" feature to detect plagiarism, and the Safe Assign feature cannot distinguish between another student's paper and a paper that you have previously turned in to another class.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a documented learning disability or other condition that may affect academic performance you should (1) make sure this documentation is on file with Office for Disability Services (SUB I, Rm. 4205; 993-2474; <http://ods.gmu.edu>) to determine the accommodations you need; and (2) talk with me to discuss your accommodation needs. I want to be helpful.