

**CRIM 490: FIREARMS LAW, POLICY, AND POLITICS**  
**FALL 2012 SYLLABUS**

**Class Time:** Fridays, 1:30 pm-4:10pm

**Class Location:** 132 Innovation Hall (Fairfax campus)

**Professor:** Dr. Christopher Koper

**Email:** [ckoper2@gmu.edu](mailto:ckoper2@gmu.edu)

**Office Phone:** 703-993-4982

**Office Location:** 4260 Chain Bridge Road (Fairfax, VA 22030), Building A6, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Room A610

**Office hours:** I will be available to meet immediately after class or by appointment at my office in Fairfax. Students may also contact me by phone or email as needed.

### **COURSE SUMMARY**

The goal of the course is to educate students about the issues surrounding gun ownership, gun crime, gun control, and other efforts to reduce gun violence in American society. We will explore the social consequences of gun ownership and examine the extent and effectiveness of society's efforts to control gun violence, highlighting research on these issues and the implications of this research for public policy. In the process, the course will seek to help students develop more perspective in assessing policy positions related to firearms and become better informed as voters and citizens. Key topics for discussion will include: the 2<sup>nd</sup> amendment and its interpretation; patterns and trends in gun ownership and gun violence; the social costs and benefits of gun availability; federal and state gun regulations; the operations of illegal gun markets and efforts to disrupt them; efforts to suppress illegal gun use; the effectiveness of gun control and other efforts to prevent gun violence; public opinion about gun control; and political aspects of the policymaking process.

### **COURSE WEBSITE**

There is a website for the course which is located at:

<http://gemini.gmu.edu/cebcp/crim490.html>. This website has general information about the class, links to readings that are not available through the University library system, special announcements, and a course contract that all students are required to sign. Additionally, you can access this syllabus at the class website.

### **COURSE FORMAT AND GUIDELINES FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

Classes will primarily involve lecture and discussion. Students are expected to complete assigned readings prior to class and be prepared to discuss them during class. Students who miss class should make arrangements to obtain notes from a classmate; the professor will not provide class notes.

To ensure that everyone has a good experience with in-class participation, please observe the following guidelines: prepare for class discussion by keeping current with the readings; respect others by actively listening and putting away/turning off all cell phones and the internet; feel free to ask questions of your peers and me; and give others a chance to speak.

### **COURSE GRADING, EXAMINATIONS, AND ASSIGNMENTS**

Students' grades will be based on: 1) examinations; 2) weekly assignments; and 3) a short paper.

Examinations: There will be two mid-term examinations and one final examination. The final examination will be cumulative. Each examination may include multiple choice, true-false, and short answer/short essay questions. All exams will be administered and taken in class. Students will not be permitted to use notes, books, articles, or other materials during the examinations.

There are no make-up exams for this class. Only under exceptional circumstances (overnight hospitalization, death in immediate family during examination times) will a make-up exam be given.

Weekly assignments: Students will be responsible for preparing short written answers to questions that will be assigned for each week's readings. The reading questions for each assignment will be posted on the course website. There will be 10 weekly assignments over the course of the semester. (There will not be a written assignment due on week 1, examination days, or other days when class does not meet.) The weekly assignments will be due at the beginning of each class. In tallying final grades, each student's single lowest score on these assignments will be dropped.

Short paper: Students will write a short essay on a news story, editorial, or other public item regarding firearms. Students will select this item from a list that the instructor will post on the course website. In their essays, students should: 1) summarize the key issue discussed in the article/item; 2) discuss how the article/item relates to the course readings and other research discussed in class; 3) assess the accuracy and completeness of the article/item in relation to research covered in the readings and in lecture; and 4) discuss additional information and/or research needed to more fully address the policy issue under consideration. The paper will be due on November 30, 2012. The essay, which must be typed using double-spacing, 12-point font, and 1-inch margins, should be no less than 2 pages and no longer than 3 pages.

The examinations, weekly assignments, and short paper will be weighted as follows:

Examination 1:	25%
Examination 2:	25%
Final examination:	25%
Weekly assignments:	15%
Short paper:	10%

There is NO extra credit given in this class.

The grading scale for the course will be:

<u>Points</u>	<u>Grade</u>
93-100%	A
90-92%	A-
87-89%	B+
83-86%	B
80-82%	B-
77-79%	C+
73-76%	C
70-72%	C-
60-69%	D
Below 60	F

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all student members of the George Mason University community to pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal, or lie in matters related to academic work. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee and result in failing the course. Further information about these matters is available at <http://academicintegrity.gmu.edu/honorcode>.

### **STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474 (<http://ods.gmu.edu>). All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. Students with disabilities are responsible for registering with ODS and obtaining proper documentation to provide to the course instructor. Accommodations will only be provided to students who are registered with ODS.

## EMAIL CONTACT INFORMATION

Mason uses only Mason e-mail accounts to communicate with enrolled students. Students must activate their Mason e-mail account, use it to communicate with their department and other administrative units, and check it regularly for important university information including messages related to this class. See <http://masonlive.gmu.edu> for more information.

## REQUIRED READING

There is one book that students are required to purchase for this course:

- Spitzer, Robert J. (2012). *The Politics of Gun Control*. 5<sup>th</sup> Edition. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers.

All other required course readings are available as documented below through the University's online library system (e-journals and e-reserves), the course website, or the internet. The library's e-journal system can be located under "Research Tools" at the university library system <http://library.gmu.edu/>. To access readings available through the e-reserve system, use the following instructions:

Go To	<a href="http://furbo.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRnexttermgen.cgi">http://furbo.gmu.edu/cgi-bin/ers/OSCRnexttermgen.cgi</a>
Select	CRIM 490, Section 003
Instructor	Christopher Koper
Password	(to be determined)

## COURSE OUTLINE: DATES, TOPICS, AND ASSOCIATED READINGS

(Please note carefully the assigned pages for each reading and the location where the reading can be obtained.)

### August 31st: Course introduction, basics on firearms and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment

- Spitzer (2012) chapters 1 and 2 (pages 1-46)
- Supreme Court of the United States. District of Columbia et al. v. Heller. Certiorari to the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Pages 1-3 (Syllabus). [Available on the course website.](#)

### September 7th: Patterns of firearms ownership and firearms violence

- L. Hepburn, M. Miller, D. Azrael, and D. Hemenway. (2007). The US gun stock: Results from the 2004 national firearms survey. *Injury Prevention*, Vol. 13, pages 15-19. Available through the library's e-journals.
- National Research Council. (2005). *Firearms and Violence: A Critical Review*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Pages 59-71. Available through the library's e-reserves.

**September 14th: The social consequences of gun availability—impacts of gun use in crime and self-defense**

- Philip J. Cook, Anthony A. Braga, and Mark H. Moore. (2011). Gun control. In *Crime and Public Policy*, edited by James Q. Wilson and Joan Petersilia. Oxford, United Kingdom: Oxford University Press. Pages 263-267. Available through the library's e-reserves (note that this entry is listed under the names of the editors, Wilson and Petersilia).
- Franklin Zimring. (1968). Is gun control likely to reduce violent killings? *The University of Chicago Law Review*, Vol. 35, pages 721-737. Available through the library's e-journals.
- David Hemenway, D. Azrael, and M. Miller. (2000). Gun use in the United States: Results from two national surveys. *Injury Prevention*, Vol. 6, pages 263-267. Available through the library's e-journals.

**September 21st: The social consequences of gun availability (continued)—effects of gun availability on crime**

- Cook, Braga, and Moore (2011), pages 267-268. See full citation and location under September 14<sup>th</sup> assignment.
- Franklin E. Zimring and Gordon Hawkins. (1997). *Crime is Not the Problem: Lethal Violence in America*. New York: Oxford University Press. Pages 34-57. Available through the library's e-reserves (note that pages 34-50 and 51-57 are contained in two separate entries on e-reserves).
- Philip J. Cook and Jens Ludwig. (2002). The costs of gun violence against children. In *Children, Youth, and Gun Violence. The Future of Children*, Vol. 12, Number 2. Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucille Packard Foundation. Pages 87-99. Available on the course website and on the internet at:  
[http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/12\\_02\\_06.pdf](http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/12_02_06.pdf)

### September 28th: Exam

### October 5th: Banning or reducing the lethality of firearms

- Colin Loftin, David McDowall, Brian Wiersema, and Talbert J. Cottey. (1991). Effects of restrictive licensing of handguns on homicide and suicide in the District of Columbia. *New England Journal of Medicine*, Vol. 325, pages 1615-1620. Available through the library's e-journals.
- Philip Cook. (1981). The 'Saturday night special': An assessment of alternative definitions from a policy perspective. *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 72, Number 4, pages 1735-1745. Available through the library's e-journals.
- Christopher S. Koper. 2004. *An Updated Assessment of the Federal Assault Weapons Ban: Impacts on Gun Markets and Gun Violence, 1994-2003*. Report to the National Institute of Justice. Philadelphia: Jerry Lee Center of Criminology, University of Pennsylvania. Pages 1-3, 80-91. Available on the course website and on the internet at: [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/204431.pdf).
- David Hemenway. (2004). *Private Guns, Public Health*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. Pages 130-140. Available through the library's e-reserves (note that there are multiple entries from this book on e-reserves).

### October 12th: Restricting gun supply and access to guns—gun markets and federal gun controls

- Legal Community Against Gun Violence. (2008 Edition). *Regulating Guns in America*. San Francisco. Pages 105-108, 115-117, 145-148. Available on the course website and on the internet at: [http://www.lcav.org/publications-briefs/reports\\_analyses/RegGuns.entire.report.pdf](http://www.lcav.org/publications-briefs/reports_analyses/RegGuns.entire.report.pdf)
- Anthony A. Braga, Philip J. Cook, David M. Kennedy, and Mark H. Moore. (2002). The illegal supply of firearms. In *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research*, Vol. 29, edited by Michael Tonry and Norval Morris. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Pages 319-340. Available through the library's e-journals.
- Hemenway (2004), pages 141-146. See full citation and location under October 5<sup>th</sup> assignment.

### October 19th: Restricting the gun supply and access to guns (continued)—state controls

- Jon S. Vernick and Lisa M. Hepburn. (2003). State and federal gun laws: Trends for 1970-1999. In *Evaluating Gun Policy: Effects on Crime and Violence*, edited by Jens Ludwig and Philip J. Cook. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution. Pages 353-367. Available through library's e-reserves (note that this entry is listed under the names of the editors, Ludwig and Cook).
- Ik-Whan Kwon and Daniel W. Baack. (2005). The effectiveness of legislation controlling gun usage: A holistic measure of gun control legislation. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, Vol. 64, Number 2, pages 533-547. Available through the library's e-journals.

### October 26th: Regulating uses of guns

- Hemenway (2004), pages 96-104. See full citation and location under October 5<sup>th</sup> assignment.
- Glenn L. Pierce and William J. Bowers. (1981). The Bartley-Fox Gun Law's Short-Term Impact on Crime in Boston. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, Vol. 455, pages 120-137. Available through the library's e-journals.
- Kris Hundley, Susan T. Martin, and Connie Humburg. (2012). Florida "Stand your ground" law yields some shocking outcomes depending on how law is applied. *Tampabay.com*, June 1. Available on the course website.

### November 2nd: Exam

### November 9th: Punishing gun crime

- Colin Loftin, Milton Heumann, and David McDowall. (1983). Mandatory sentencing and firearms violence: evaluating an alternative to gun control. *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 17, Number 2, pages 287-312. Available through the library's e-journals.
- Jack McDevitt, Scott H. Decker, Natalie Kroovand Hipple, and Edmund F. McGarrell. (2006). *Project Safe Neighborhoods: Strategic Interventions. Offender Notification Meetings: Case Study 2*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. Pages 1-15. Available on the course website and on the internet at: [http://www.psn.gov/pubs/pdf/PSN\\_CaseStudy2.pdf](http://www.psn.gov/pubs/pdf/PSN_CaseStudy2.pdf).
- Robin Noble. (2008). *Gun Courts*. Washington, DC: American Prosecutors Research Institute. Pages 1-4. Available on the course website and on the internet at: [http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/swift\\_certain\\_vol\\_4\\_no\\_3\\_and\\_4\\_08.pdf](http://www.ndaa.org/pdf/swift_certain_vol_4_no_3_and_4_08.pdf).

**November 16th: Class does not meet**

**November 23rd: Class does not meet (Thanksgiving holiday)**

**November 30th: Law enforcement efforts to reduce gun violence**

- Christopher S. Koper. (2012). *Gun Enforcement and Gun Violence Prevention Practices among Local Law Enforcement Agencies: A Research and Policy Brief*. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum. Available on the course website.
- Charles Callahan, Frederick Rivara, and Thomas Koepsell. (1996), Money for guns: an evaluation of the Seattle gun buy-back program. In *Under Fire: Gun Buy-Backs, Exchanges, and Amnesty Programs*, edited by Martha Plotkin. Washington, DC: Police Executive Research Forum. Pages 81-92. Available through the library's e-reserves (note that this entry is listed under the name of the editor, Martha Plotkin).
- Lawrence W. Sherman, James W. Shaw, and Dennis P. Rogan. (1995). *The Kansas City Gun Experiment*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. Pages 1-10. Available on the course website and on the internet at: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/kang.pdf>.

**December 7th: Public opinion and the politics of gun policy, course wrap-up and discussion**

- Spitzer (2012), chapter 4, pages 87-128
- Smith, Tom W. (2002). Public opinion about gun policies. In *Children, Youth, and Gun Violence. The Future of Children*, Vol. 12, Number 2. Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucille Packard Foundation. Pages 155-161. Available on the course website and on the internet at: [http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/12\\_02\\_11.pdf](http://www.futureofchildren.org/futureofchildren/publications/docs/12_02_11.pdf)
- Jones, Jeffrey M. (2011). Record-Low 26% in U.S. Favor Handgun Ban. Princeton, NJ: Gallup. Pages 1-5. Available on the course website.

**December 14<sup>th</sup>: Final exam (1:30-4:10)**



**ENROLLMENT INFORMATION**

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the Schedule of Classes. (Deadlines each semester are published in the Schedule of Classes available from the Registrar's Website at [registrar.gmu.edu](http://registrar.gmu.edu).)

The last day to add this course is September 4, 2012.

The last day to drop this course is September 28, 2012.

After the last day to drop a class, 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. See the Schedule of Classes for selective withdrawal procedures.