

CRIM 511: Evidence-based Crime and Justice Policy



College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Department of Criminology, Law & Society

Fall 2023

CRIM 511-001, Class #[79152](#)

Instructor: Dr. Matthew D'Anna

[Bio](#) | [Email](#) | [Phone](#) | [Projects](#) | [Office hours](#) | [Zoom](#)

Meeting Dates & Location:

24 August – 07 December 2023

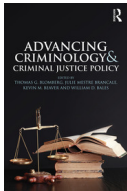
Thursdays at 5:55 PM - 7:10 PM

[Aquia \(AQ\) 347](#) and [Blackboard](#)

Class Materials:



[Microsoft Office](#)



Blomberg, T., Brancale, J., Beaver, K., & Bales, W. (Eds.). (2016). *Advancing Criminology and Criminal Justice Policy* (1st ed.). Routledge. ([it's free with your GMU credentials](#))



Various publicly available/open source datasets



[Readings and lectures provided as necessary](#)

Course Description:

This course examines the role that science and research play in criminal justice agencies, policies, and practices. This includes:

- Understanding the strengths and limitations of the evidence-based practice framework
- Reviewing the evidence base for the effectiveness, fairness, theoretical underpinnings and efficiency of various policies and practices to deal with crime and justice issues
- Critically examining and understanding how research is translated into policy and practice

The goal of this course is to prepare students to effectively and thoughtfully implement evidence-based practices within a criminal justice agency. This course will demonstrate to students the process of researching key literature and collecting relevant data on a topic, in order to craft sound studies. Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Summarize the goals and key principles of evidence-based crime policy
- Evaluate bodies of evidence for essential crime and justice policies and practices
- Analyze the the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches
- Apply theoretical knowledge to real-world problems to identify tangible, practical solutions

Evaluation:

100 points

Textbook Reflections:	<i>16 points</i>
Reading Recaps:	<i>21 points</i>
Literature Reviews:	<i>21 points</i>
Data Discovery:	<i>21 points</i>
Independent Study:	<i>21 points</i>

Grade Scale:

Grade	Points	GPA
A+	100-97	4.00
A	96-93	4.00
A-	92-90	3.67
B+	89-87	3.33
B	86-83	3.00
B-	82-80	2.67
C	79-70	2.00
D	69-60	1.00
F	59-0	0.00

Textbook Reflections:

A [textbook reflection](#) is a 1-page summary of one chapter from a required weekly reading from the Bloomberg et al (2016) text. Each textbook reflection exposes students to the process of understanding evidence-based theory, as well as the process of distilling dense content into a digestible format. There are 33 opportunities for textbook reflections during the semester. Students must submit **four** reflections

from one chapter each. Each is worth 4 points, totalling 16% of the overall grade. Textbook reflections should be conducted and submitted independently, and *may be submitted as a written document or as an in-class presentation*. Textbook Reflections are throughout the semester, generally in between other projects.

Reading Recaps:

A [reading recap](#) is a 1-page summary of the research questions, data, methods, findings, and integration/application of a selected criminal justice research article based on relevant research curated for this course. There are **three** reading recaps during the semester, worth 7 points each (21% of the overall grade). Reading recaps should be conducted and submitted independently, and *may be submitted as a written document or as an in-class presentation*. Reading Recaps are due several weeks after the topic is discussed during class.

Literature Reviews:

A [literature review](#) is a 1-page write-up based on relevant research identified by the student. There are **three** literature reviews during the semester, worth 7 points each (21% of the overall grade). Each literature review summarizes the research questions, data, methods, findings, and integration/application of a criminal justice research article, selected by the student. That selection should come from a peer-reviewed academic journal, and have a clear connection to one of the three class topics (see Course Outline for topics). Literature reviews should be conducted and submitted independently, and *may be submitted as a written document or as an in-class presentation*. Literature Reviews are due several weeks after the topic is discussed during class.

Data Discovery:

[Data discovery](#) involves the identification and integration of relevant data for conducting evidence-based policy analysis on a given topic. There are **three** Data Discovery assignments during the semester, corresponding to each of the class topics, worth 7 points each (21% of the overall grade). Data discovery can be conducted in groups, but each student should submit their work independently. These *may be submitted as a written document or as an in-class presentation*. Data Discovery assignments are due several weeks after the topic is discussed during class.

Independent Study:

The [independent study](#) is a culmination of skills and methods from other assignments, applied to a crime and justice topic of a student's choosing. The independent study involves a literature review, data discovery, crafting a methodology, and potential policy implications for conducting a data-driven, decision-oriented, crime and justice policy study. This project is worth 21 points, totalling 21% of the overall grade. The independent study can be conducted in groups, but each student should submit their work independently. This project is part of multiple class sessions throughout the semester, and portions of the independent study are due monthly. The complete project *may be submitted as a written document or as an in-class presentation on 07 December 2023*.

Extra Credit:

There is an opportunity for 2 extra credit points during the semester. See [here](#) for further details.

Miscellaneous stuff:Blackboard:

This course is paperless and uses Blackboard extensively. It is recommended to check it regularly for any news and updates. New Blackboard users seeking assistance can contact 703.993.8870 or courses@gmu.edu.

Emergencies:

Even though this course is fully online and on your computer screen, check the George Mason homepage and register for GMU's [emergency alert system](#). In the event of any class-specific cancellations, students will be notified as soon as possible via Blackboard.

Disability information:

If you are a student with a disability and require special academic accommodations, please see me and contact [Disability Services](#) (703.993.2474) to ensure your documentation is on file.

Assistance services:

- Students seeking help with their writing skills can contact the [University Writing Center](#).
- If you are in personal distress, please contact [Counseling and Psychological Services](#).
- Non-native English speakers seeking linguistic and cultural enrichment services can contact the George Mason [English Language Institute](#).
- The [Center for the Advancement of Well-Being](#) (CWB) is an interdisciplinary center promoting the science and practice of healthy living.
- And many more! [See here for a comprehensive list of services available to you](#).

Academic integrity:

George Mason University has an Honor Code that requires all members of this community to maintain the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Cheating, plagiarism, lying, and stealing are all prohibited. All violations will be reported to the Honor Committee. See [The Mason Honor Code](#) and the [Office of Academic Integrity](#) for further information. Don't cheat. Just. Don't. Cheat.

Enrollment:

Students are responsible for verifying their enrollment in this class. Schedule adjustments should be made by the deadlines published in the [Schedule of Classes](#).

After the last day to drop a class, withdrawing from this class requires the approval of the Dean and is only allowed for non-academic reasons. See the [University Catalog](#) for selective withdrawal procedures and any additional information.

Faculty evaluation:

This course will be using the Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) form. It will be administered via a link provided in Blackboard. Candid, honest, and fair feedback is welcome and appreciated!

If we get 13 total responses, EVERYONE gets 2pts extra credit..

Video recording:

This course is technically hybrid, with most sessions live and in-person. Any accompanying online content will be recorded via [Zoom](#) and made available on [Blackboard](#). Any recording of this course without prior consent is strictly prohibited.

Jobs & Internships:

Throughout the semester, information will be made available about jobs and internships relevant to this course, and the criminal justice field in general. [This file will be regularly updated as opportunities arise](#); check often for updated information.

Office hours:

Given my schedule and the timing of this course, office hours are a bit non-traditional. Aside from our regularly scheduled weekly classes, questions are bound to arise. That's good, and expected. I'm on campus and available before class each week. [Email](#) will always be the best initial means to communicate. As necessary, we can also schedule Zoom conversations as a form of office hours.

Course Outline:

Class	Date	Topic	Section	Textbook	Due
1	8/24/2023	Introduction, Orientation, Overview			
2	8/31/2023	Dissecting an academic article		Bloomberg et al (2016) Part I & II, Ch. 1-8	Independent Study: Topic Selection
3	9/7/2023	Mass Shootings	Academic		
4	9/14/2023		Discussion and Data		
5	9/21/2023	Independent Study	Literature Review Sources	Bloomberg et al (2016) Part III, Ch. 9-16	Textbook Reflection 1
6	9/28/2023	Police Violence	Academic		Independent Study: Literature Sources
	10/5/2023	NO CLASS, SORRY			Reading Recap 1
					Literature Review 1
					Data Discovery 1
7	10/12/2023	Police Violence	Discussion and Data	Bloomberg et al (2016) Part III, Ch. 9-16	
8	10/19/2023	Independent Study	Data Sources	Bloomberg et al (2016) Part IV, Ch. 17-28	Textbook Reflection 2
9	10/26/2023	Intimate Partner Violence	Academic		Independent Study: Data Sources
10	11/2/2023		Discussion and Data		Reading Recap 2
					Literature Review 2
				Data Discovery 2	
11	11/9/2023	Independent Study	Methodology	Bloomberg et al (2016) Part V, Ch. 29-33	
12	11/16/2023				Textbook Reflection 3
	11/23/2023	TURKEY DAY - NO CLASS			
13	11/30/2023	Independent Study	Policy Implications	Bloomberg et al (2016) Part V, Ch. 29-33	Independent Study: Methodology
					Textbook Reflection 4
					Reading Recap 3
					Literature Review 3
					Data Discovery 3
14	12/7/2023	Independent Study			Independent Study
					Extra Credit