POLITICS OF CRIME POLICY
CRIM 561:001
Fall Semester 2023

INSTRUCTOR	IN-PERSON SEMINAR
Devon Johnson, Ph.D.	Tuesdays, 4:30-5:45pm
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Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-2pm in person	Blackboard
By appt in person or virtual	

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course explores the socio-political context in which crime policy is created. The influence of public opinion, political institutions, interest groups, and the media will be examined to better understand the various factors that affect the development of criminal justice policy. Over the course of the semester, we will explore topics related to crime prevention, policing, and punishment, and will wrestle with questions such as: How and why do criminal justice policy approaches change over time? How do attributions about the causes of crime impact the development of crime policies? What are the sources of public attitudes toward crime and how does public opinion influence criminal justice policymaking? How does media coverage and interest group activity shape the discourse on crime and crime policy? How has crime been used in political campaigns? Several crime policies will be examined in-depth as case studies and will be compared for relevant themes. By the end of this class, students should have developed a deep understanding of the course material and be able to explain how politics, public opinion, and the media interact to influence the development of crime policy at the national, state, and local level.

COURSE FORMAT

This is a hybrid course (50% in-person, 50% asynchronous online) designed for students in the MS in Criminal Justice program. An in-person seminar will be held on Tuesdays and asynchronous online assignments and activities will be completed on Blackboard.

The in-person seminar will be discussion-based and its success will depend on the preparation and active participation of the students and instructor alike. Although some class sessions may include a short lecture, we will spend most of our time discussing the assigned reading and videos and their implications for the topic at hand. Asynchronous assignments will be used to assess student comprehension and engagement with the material. Students will be encouraged to think critically about the course materials and topics, and to apply and synthesize their (new) knowledge.

ASSIGNMENTS AND STUDENT EVALUATION

1) Participation/Discussion (20% of final grade). Students are expected to attend the Tuesday seminars and actively engage in class discussions and exercises. Students should come to class having closely read and thoughtfully considered the required readings and videos. Participation grades will be based on a) the submission of discussion questions ahead of each seminar, and b) the extent to which students consistently contribute to seminar discussions by critically examining the course material, raising useful questions or comments, applying the course material to other relevant topics, and creating a positive, respectful classroom environment.

2) Async Online Activities (26% of final grade). Students are expected to read or watch all required course material. To demonstrate comprehension of and engagement with the assigned material, students will complete asynchronous online assignments each week (including reflection journals, reading reviews, and discussion boards, among others).

3) Crime Policy Case Study Portfolio (54% of final grade). Students will select one crime policy and complete several assignments to fill their case study portfolio. Assignments will examine public opinion, interest group/political activity, media coverage/framing, and expert commentary on that policy. Building on this work, students will imagine themselves as a consultant to a criminal justice professional or policymaker and will make recommendations related to their selected crime policy via a presentation and written executive summary. Detailed information on the format, requirements, and evaluation criteria for the portfolio assignments will be forthcoming.

Assignment	Points	Percentage
Participation/Discussion		20%
2 Discussion questions	15 (1.5 x 10 modules)	
Participation in seminar	5 (0.5 x 10 seminars)	
Async Online Activities		26%
8 module assignments	24 (3 x 8 modules)	
Course reflection journal	2	
Crime Policy Case Study Portfolio		54%
Brainstorming & Topic Selection	2	
Interest Group/Political Activity	5	
Public Opinion	5	
Media Coverage/Framing	5	
Outline & Progress Reports	3	
Presentation & Executive Summary	30	
Peer Review of Presentations	4	
Total	**100 points**	**100%**

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

Points	Percentage	Grade
93-100	93-100%	A
90-92	90-92%	A-
87-89	87-89%	B+
83-86	83-86%	B
80-82	80-82%	B-
70-79	70-79%	C
0-69	0-69%	F

POLICIES ON STUDENT WORK

Late Assignments: 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 possible). Late submissions will typically be accepted; in some circumstances, there may be a grade reduction. These decisions are at the discretion of the instructor.

Make-Up Opportunities: Opportunities to make-up missed work may be available in some circumstances. These decisions are at the discretion of the instructor. If you fall behind, please contact the instructor to discuss options for completing missed assignments.

> ***Note****: We are living in extraordinary times due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the "new normal." Students and faculty are operating under increased stress and may face circumstances that necessitate greater flexibility, understanding, and support. Please do not hesitate to reach out to the instructor if you need additional accommodations beyond those described above.*

Keep Copies of Submitted Work: Students are expected to retain an electronic copy of all work submitted; it is a good idea to keep a copy of all Blackboard submission confirmation notices as well. If transmission of the work fails, students are expected to submit the original document according to the instructor's directions. Students are expected to verify their own Blackboard submissions by returning to the appropriate place in Blackboard after the work has been posted.

Turnaround Time for Grading: Grading for an assignment usually does not begin until on or after the due date. In most cases, assignments submitted on time will be graded within 7 days of the due date (go to the "My Grades" section of Blackboard for scores and feedback). Grading and feedback on some assignments may take longer.

Final Course Grades: Final course grades that are within 0.5 points of the next higher grade will automatically be rounded up to the higher grade (for example, a 79.5/C will become an 80/B-). Final course grades that are on the borderline between two grades may be bumped up to the next grade at the sole discretion of the instructor.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

If you need academic accommodations, please inform the instructor 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.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE GMU 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/full-honor-code-document/.

All graded work for this class must be completed *independently and by the student*. All writing assignments will be evaluated using anti-plagiarism software and may be scanned for AI-generated material. Please be sure that the work you submit in this class is your own (not written by someone else or created by AI software), and that you provide proper citations when referencing sources and other people's words or ideas.

Posting instructor-created materials (such as assignments, exams, or grading rubrics) to public online "study" sites is a violation of Mason's Honor Code.

Instructors are required to report suspected violations of the Honor Code to the Mason Honor Committee. 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 EXPECTATIONS

Consistent with Mason's emphasis on diversity and inclusion, everyone in this course is expected to be respectful of others and open to learning. Your classmates may have different perspectives and experiences related to the course topics than you (or the instructor), and views may be strongly held. Students and the instructor are encouraged to speak thoughtfully, listen carefully, and be self-reflective. When engaging online, students and the instructor are expected to follow courteous Internet etiquette. All members of the class are expected to help promote in-person and online learning spaces 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 turn off the volume on your cell phone and refrain from non-course-related activities during the in-person seminar. Please be mindful that images on laptop and smartphone screens may be distracting to your peers, especially if you are engaged in activities like chatting, gaming, shopping, etc.

BLACKBOARD AND COURSE COMMUNICATION

Because this is a hybrid class with an asynchronous component, students will need to login to Blackboard regularly to review and complete assignments. Changes to the course schedule, assignments, and other important information will be posted on Blackboard and sent to your Mason email address. To login to Blackboard go to: http://mymason.gmu.edu, click on the Courses tab, and locate the link to CRIM 561 in your course list. For technical assistance with Blackboard, go to: https://its.gmu.edu/knowledge-base/blackboard-instructional-technology-support-for-students/

Students must use their Mason accounts for all email communication with the instructor. Students should check their Mason email account regularly for course announcements and other information.

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 try to reply to emails within two business days (but usually sooner).

TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS AND STUDENT PRIVACY

Technology requirements for hybrid/online classes are available under "Policies & Expectations" on Blackboard. To complete asynchronous assignments, students will need reliable access to a laptop or desktop computer with an updated operating system and a stable broadband Internet connection. A functional camera and microphone are also highly recommended in case we need to pivot to synchronous class meetings.

Synchronous class meetings may be recorded by the instructor and posted to Blackboard. Recordings will only be accessible to students taking this course during this semester. All course materials posted to Blackboard are private to this class; by federal law, any materials that identify specific students (via their name, voice, or image) must not be shared with anyone not enrolled in this class.

Synchronous class meetings that include audio, textual, or visual information from other students must be viewed privately; do not watch these live sessions with anyone who is not a member of this class. In addition, video recordings of the class meetings made by the instructor or a student that includes audio, visual, or textual information from other students are private; they must not be shared with anyone who is not a member of this class.

Please respect the privacy of any students (or instructor) who may disclose personal information in the class or on Blackboard. Please respect everyone's right to freely choose whether to disclose or not disclose personal information.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

1) Wozniak, Kevin H. 2023. *The Politics of Crime Prevention: Race, Public Opinion, and the Meaning of Community Safety*. New York University Press. (E-book available at Mason Libraries)

2) Additional readings and videos assigned and available on Blackboard.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

For the purposes of this course, the week will start on Tuesdays and end on Sundays. The in-person seminars are on Tuesday. After the seminar, you will complete async assignments between Wednesday-Sunday to prepare for the following week's seminar. All async assignments are due on Sundays by 11:59pm. Portfolio assignments will be due on Sundays by 11:59pm, unless otherwise noted.

Detailed guidelines for all assignments will be posted on Blackboard in the Weekly Lesson Folders. The course schedule and assignments listed below are subject to change; any changes will be announced on Blackboard and sent to students' Mason email accounts.

Date	In-Person Seminar Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm	Async Assignments Wednesday-Sunday Due Sundays by 11:59pm (see Blackboard for details)
Week 1 *Aug 22-27*	**Tuesday 8/22** Course Introduction	**Week 1 Async Assignments** Post self-introduction Complete survey **Complete Module 1 Reading Assignment** **Submit Module 1 Discussion Questions**
Week 2 *Aug 29-Sep 3*	**Tuesday 8/29** ***Seminar Canceled***	**Finish Module 1 Assignments (if incomplete)** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Brainstorming Portfolio Policies

Date	In-Person Seminar Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm	Async Assignments Wednesday-Sunday Due Sundays by 11:59pm (see Blackboard for details)
Week 3 *Sep 5-Sep 10*	**Tuesday 9/5** Seminar Discussion on Module 1 Intro to Criminal Justice Policymaking	**Complete & Submit Module 2 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 2 Discussion Questions**
Week 4 *Sep 12-17*	**Tuesday 9/12** Seminar Discussion on Module 2 Trends in Public Opinion, Crime, and Politics	**Complete & Submit Module 3 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 3 Discussion Questions** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Portfolio Topic
Week 5 *Sep 19-24*	**Tuesday 9/19** Seminar Discussion on Module 3 Views about Crime and Crime Prevention	**Complete & Submit Module 4 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 4 Discussion Questions**
Week 6 *Sep 26-Oct 1*	**Tuesday 9/26** Seminar Discussion on Module 4 Understanding Prevention Policy Preferences	**Complete & Submit Module 5 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 5 Discussion Questions** Work on Portfolio Assignment: Interest Group/Political Activity
Week 7 *Oct 3-8*	**Tuesday 10/3** Seminar Discussion on Module 5 Framing, Messaging & Criminal Justice Policy	**Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Interest Group/Political Activity Work on Portfolio Assignment: Public Opinion

Date	In-Person Seminar Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm	Async Assignments Wednesday-Sunday Due Sundays by 11:59pm (see Blackboard for details)
Week 8 *Oct 10-15*	**Tuesday 10/10** **Fall Break – No Seminar** *Monday Classes Meet on Tuesday This Week*	**Complete & Submit Module 6 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 6 Discussion Questions** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Public Opinion
Week 9 *Oct 17-22*	**Tuesday 10/17** Seminar Discussion on Module 6 Media/Social Media & the Politics of Crime Policy	**Complete & Submit Module 7 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 7 Discussion Questions** Work on Portfolio Assignment: Media Coverage/Framing
Week 10 *Oct 24-29*	**Tuesday, 10/24** Seminar Discussion on Module 7 *Case Study A*: Politics of Crime Policy at the Local, State and National Level	**Complete & Submit Module 8 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 8 Discussion Questions** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Media Coverage/Framing
Week 11 *Oct 31-Nov 5*	**Tuesday 10/31** Seminar Discussion on Module 8 *Case Study B:* Politics of Crime Policy at the Local, State and National Level	**Complete & Submit Module 9 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) **Submit Module 9 Discussion Questions** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Outline
Week 12 *Nov 7-12*	**Tuesday 11/7** Seminar Discussion on Module 9 Case Study C: Politics of Crime Policy at the Local, State and National Level	**Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Progress Report and/or Draft

Date	In-Person Seminar Tuesdays 4:30-5:45pm	Async Assignments Wednesday-Sunday Due Sundays by 11:59pm (see Blackboard for details)
Week 13 Nov 14-19	**Tuesday 11/14** No Seminar Discussion ***Optional Check-in Meetings This Week***	**Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Progress Report and/or Draft
Week 14 Nov 21-26	**Tuesday 11/21** No Seminar Discussion ***Optional Check-in Meetings This Week***	**Compete & Submit Module 10 Async Assignments** (reading, videos, and/or online activities) ***Thanksgiving Break***
Week 15 Nov 28-Dec 3	**Tuesday 11/28** Seminar Discussion on Module 10 Course Wrap Up	**Submit Course Reflection Journal** **Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Presentation & Executive Summary
Finals Week	**Tuesday, 12/12**	**Submit Portfolio Assignment:** Peer Review of Presentations