CRIM 511 Evidence-based Crime and Justice Policy

Class Information

- Instructor: Prof David Wilson
- Day and Time: Wednesday 4:30 PM AM–7:10 PM
- Location: Innovation Hall 330
- Lasted Edited: January 8, 2024

Office

I will not have set office hours, but I am happy to schedule a time to meet with any student via Zoom or in-person on a day that I am on campus. To set up a time, email me at dwilsonb@gmu.edu. If it is urgent, you can call or text me at 301.408.8331. My office is in the main CLS suite.

Course Description and Objectives

In this course we will examine the role that science and research play in criminal justice agencies, policies, and practices. We will review the evidence-base for the effectiveness, fairness, and efficiency of key approaches and strategies; critically examine the evidence-based policy framework; and learn how research is applied and translated to the policy and practice arenas. The goal of this course is to prepare you to effectively and thoughtfully implement evidence-based practices within a criminal justice agency.

On completion of this course you should be able to:

- Summarize the goals, objectives, and key principles of evidence-based crime policy;
- Discuss the major strengths and weaknesses of the evidence-based policy framework;
- Evaluate the evidence-base for key crime and justice policies and practices;
- Analyze the strengths and weaknesses of different research approaches;
- Synthesize knowledge about effective and ineffective approaches and apply this knowledge to real-world cases.

Required Text

Blomberg, T. G., Brancale, J. M., Beaver, K. M., & Bales, W. D. (Eds.). (2016). Advancing criminology and criminal justice policy. New York, NY, Routledge

This book is available for free as a PDF from our library. You can download the entire book. Please let me know if you have any difficulties obtaining it. You may also purchase it if you want a hardcopy (I have not, however, ordered in for the bookstore).

Additional readings will be made available on Blackboard.

Weekly reading assignments are listed under Course Schedule and Reading Assignments.

Course Format and Key Assignments

This course will be taught in a standard face-to-face format. You will prepare for class each week by reading the assigned texts and completing a brief quiz on your own time. Class sessions will be dedicated to a mini lecture, discussion and group work. This approach relies heavily on you completing the assigned readings before class and coming prepared to discuss them. The purpose of the classes is to clarify issues that arise in the reading, assess important questions and controversies, and develop your own critical thinking through discussion and questions. When all students commit to actively participating, everybody benefits and maximizes their learning and understanding of the material.

See Blackboard for full details of each assignment.

- Weekly reading reflections (on Blackboard): 10%
- Students as Experts: 10%. One or two students each week will lead the class in a discussion of the assigned reading.
- Group Project and Presentation: 30%. Students work in groups to complete a course project that applies the material to a real-world crime problem.
- Policy Analysis Paper: 50%. Semester-long cumulative paper in which you explore evidence and implementation issues for a program or policy of your choice.

Letter grades for this course will be based on the following points breakdown, according to the Graduate Regular scale:

Grade	Percent
A+	97-100
A	93-96.9

Grade	Percent
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C	70-79.9
F	< 70

Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The weekly schedule is subject to change depending on the progress of the class. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Blackboard. All non-textbook readings will be made available on Blackboard. Required reading assignments, and quizzes must be completed before the class session each week. Assignments are typically due at 11:59 PM the night before class.

Class 1, Jan 17: What is evidence-based policy?

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 1, 3, and 33

Class 2, Jan 24: How do we know if it works?

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 2
- Read Farrington (2003)
- Read Chalmers (2003)

Class 3, Jan 31: Evidence vs. experience

- Read Willis (2013)
- Read Weisburd and Neyroud (2011)
- Read Sparrow (2011)

Class 4, Feb 7: Evidence-based crime prevention I: Individuals and families

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 5-6
- Read Welsh and Farrington (2007)

Class 5, Feb 14: Evidence-based crime prevention II: Communities and places

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 7-8
- Read Gill (2016) (skip pages 84-93)
- Watch online lecture #4 and complete quiz #4
- **Assignment:** Proposed policy analysis topic due on blackboard by 11:59pm, Tues, Feb 13

Class 6, Feb 21: Evidence-based policing

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 9-11
- Read Sherman (1998)
- Read Lum et al. (2011)
- **Assignment:** Group contract due on Blackboard by 11:59pm, Tues, Feb 21

Class 7, Feb 28:: Evidence-based courts and sentencing

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 12-15

March 6: Spring Break

Class 8, Mar 13: Evidence-based incarceration policy

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 19-20, 29
- Read Fernandes and Crutchfield (2018)
- **Assignment:** Policy analysis, problem analysis part due on Blackboard by 11:59pm, Tues, Mar 12

Class 9, Mar 20: Evidence-based corrections

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 17-18
- Read Lipsey and Cullen (2007)
- Read Latessa et al. (2002)

Class 10, Mar 27: Evidence-based reentry

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapters 21-23
- Read Travis (2014)
- **Assignment:** Group project outline and logic model due on Blackboard by 11:59pm, Tues, Mar 26

Class 11, Apr 3: It works… but is it cost-effective?

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 31
- Read Marsh et al. (2008)
- Read Manning et al. (2018)

Class 12, Apr 10: How do we translate the research into practice?

- Read Blomberg et al. (2016), Chapter 4
- Read Lum (2009)
- Read Pesta et al. (2019)
- Read Przybylski (2015)

Class 13, Apr 17: No class

- Work on group project
- Work on final policy analysis paper
- **Assignment:** Policy analysis, review of evidence due on Blackboard by 11:59, Tue Apr 16

Class 14, Apr 24: Presentations

- **Assignment:** Final group project presentations

Class 15, May 1: No class (finals week)

- **Assignment:** Final policy analysis paper due on Blackboard by 11:59pm, May 1

Gender Identity and Pronoun Use

If you wish, please share your name and gender pronouns with me and how best to address you in class and via email. For example, I use he/him/his for myself, and you may address me as Dr. or Prof. Wilson in email and verbally.

Statement on Academic Integrity

I expect adherence to the University Honor Code http://oai.gmu.edu/honor-code/. If I witness a suspected violation of the Honor Code, I will follow the standard reporting procedures as outlined in the University Handbook.

The integrity of the University community is affected by the individual choices made by each of us. Mason has an Honor Code with clear guidelines regarding academic integrity. Three fundamental and relatively simple principles to follow at all times are:

1. All work submitted be your own.
2. When using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations.
3. If you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification.

No grade is so important as to justify academic misconduct. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Writers give credit through accepted documentation styles. In this class, we will adhere to the APA citation and referencing style, as it is the dominant approach in criminology. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask.

Students with Disabilities

Disability Services at George Mason University is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students by upholding the laws that ensure equal treatment of people with disabilities. If you seek accommodations for this class, please first visit http://ds.gmu.edu/ for detailed information about the Disability Services registration process. Then please discuss your approved accommodations with me. Disability Services is located in Student Union Building I (SUB I), Suite 2500. Email:ods@gmu.edu | Phone: (703) 993-2474.

Readings/References

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Sparrow, M. K. (2011). *Governing science*. (New Perspectives in Policing). U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. Washington, DC. https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/232179.pdf

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