

**CRIM 523 – Law and Social Control**  
**George Mason University**  
**College of Humanities and Social Sciences**  
**Criminology, Law, and Society (CLS)**  
**Spring 2024**

Instructor: Steven Bennett  
Class meeting: Hybrid  
Tuesdays, 8:45 pm – 10:00 pm (classroom)  
Thursdays, Asynchronous  
Classroom: Fairfax Campus – East Building, Room E-134  
Office hours: By appointment  
E-mail: [sbenne22@gmu.edu](mailto:sbenne22@gmu.edu)  
Website: <http://cls.gmu.edu/>

**Course Description and Objectives**

Social control refers to a society's capacity to regulate itself according to desired principles and values. A society is a group of people who share a common culture, ethics, customs, or norms (e.g., a religious organization, an educational system, the media, an ethnic group, a police agency, etc.). One key mechanism of social control is the law. For some, the law represents the dark side of social control by creating or reinforcing existing inequalities and by acting as a tool of oppression. But the law also embodies a society's basic values, articulates the rules for social life, and mobilizes and directs resources for collective problem solving. This course introduces students to different perspectives on social control, and critically examines empirical research on how legal authorities, legal processes, and legal institutions produce social control and other outcomes. A core theme is the relationship between law and justice, including evaluating the collateral consequences of using formal control mechanisms to regulate behavior, assessing their disproportionate effects on different groups, and considering how to minimize the harm these mechanisms may cause.

By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Understand different forms of social control
- Analyze different perspectives on social control
- Evaluate empirical evidence on how the law works as a social control mechanism
- Think critically about law's harmful effects, how these impact different groups, and how to limit or minimize them
- Apply perspectives on social control to the law and specific social control practices
- Generate new insights on how to preserve social order and maximize justice

## Teaching Philosophy

This course places a strong emphasis on thinking critically about the topics it covers through discussion and writing. This means students will be expected to push beyond remembering or describing knowledge to applying, analyzing, evaluating, and articulating it. Ultimately, the goal is for the student to develop and integrate ideas into a way of seeing things that is new to him or her.

A small class setting is as an ideal opportunity to raise and answer important questions, to explore and develop ideas, and to learn from one another. The focus of this course is not on the professor delivering information, but on all participants sharing responsibility for enriching the entire class's learning experience. The success of the course hinges on your collective participation and commitment to the goal of developing a trajectory of thinking critically and creatively. With practice and considerable effort this can become a habit of mind. For more on what critical thinking is, see: <https://stearnscenter.gmu.edu/knowledge-center/course-and-curriculum-redesign/developing-criticalthinkers/>

## Readings

There is no book required for the course. All readings are posted on Blackboard in the Course Content folder for the relevant day.

## Course Format and Assignments

This is a hybrid course which means we will meet in class, face-to-face, on Tuesdays, and the Thursday class in asynchronous. For the asynchronous portion the student will have readings, videos, and/or assignments to complete outside of class. You will prepare for class each week by completing Thursday's assigned work and be prepared to discuss it in class the following Tuesday. Expect stimulating conversation and debate, but it must remain respectful of other's opinions.

## Course Grading and Requirements

There is a total of 100 points to be earned in this course. They are distributed as follows:

| ASSIGNMENT                      | POINTS/100                          |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Class discussion/participation  | 30                                  |
| Short answer assignments/papers | 20 (4 short assignments x 5 points) |
| Perspective paper 1             | 25                                  |
| Perspective paper 2             | 25                                  |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>100</b>                          |

## Course Grading Scale

| POINTS and %   | LETTER GRADE |
|----------------|--------------|
| 93-100         | A            |
| 89-92.5        | A-           |
| 85-88.5        | B+           |
| 80-84.5        | B            |
| 75-79.5        | B-           |
| 60-74.5        | C            |
| 50-59.5        | D            |
| Less than 49.5 | F            |

## Class Discussion/Participation

Class discussion and participation is essential. Your grade for class participation will be based on how much and how well you consistently:

- o Contribute to the class's understanding of the material
- o Relate the material to other course readings and topics
- o Offer constructive criticism of the material
- o Raise useful questions about the readings and the session topic
- o Promote a positive, healthy learning environment

If you will be absent for a Tuesday face-to-face class, please make every effort to notify me ahead of time. Two or more excused/unexcused absences can result in you receiving a C grade for class participation.

## Written Assignments

You will have six written assignments based on readings, videos (in Blackboard), and lectures. Four of the assignments will be short answer (each worth up to five points) and two will be longer perspective papers (a mid-term paper and a final paper, each worth up to 25 points). All of these will be completed outside of class and uploaded to Blackboard by 6 p.m., the Sunday before class on Tuesday (Blackboard will contain thorough explanations of all assignment expectations and deadlines). The purpose of these assignments is to: (1) give you an opportunity to demonstrate your critical thinking skills; and (2) to give me a sense of your understanding of the course material. Late assignments may be penalized 1 point for every day they are late.

## Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability and you need academic accommodations with appropriate documentation, please consult the Office of Disability Services (<https://ds.gmu.edu/>) and see me. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

## Academic Integrity

You must do all graded work independently unless it is specifically assigned as a group project. Furthermore, it's important you to adhere to the George Mason University Honor Code as it relates to integrity regarding coursework and grades. The Honor Code reads as follows:

“To promote a stronger sense of mutual responsibility, respect, trust, and fairness among all members of the George Mason University community and with the desire for greater academic and personal achievement, we, the student members of the University Community have set forth this: Student members of the George Mason University community pledge not to cheat, plagiarize, steal and/or lie in matters related to academic work.”

Use of Generative-Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be used following the fundamental principles of the Honor Code. This includes being honest about the use of these tools for submitted work and including citations when using the work of others, whether individual people of Generative-AI tools.

More information about the Honor Code, including definitions of cheating, lying, and plagiarism, can be found at the Office of Academic Integrity: <https://oai.gmu.edu/>

## Inclusivity

I consider this class an intentionally inclusive learning community. We should welcome and value individuals and their differences including background, race, economic status, gender expression and identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and disability. We can learn a great deal from those who are different than us. In addition to respect for others, our views and opinions should be grounded in evidence and thoughtful deliberation.

## Course Schedule and Reading Assignments

The weekly schedule is subject to change depending on the progress of the class. Required readings, online media, lectures, and any written assignments assigned during the asynchronous period must be completed before the next face-to-face class session.

### **Week 1:** Jan. 16 & 18, 2024- **What is Social Control & The Law AS Social Control**

Bloomfield, Paul (2018). What ‘justice’ really means. The Stone. *New York Times*.

Garland, David (1995). Social control, in A. and J. Kuper (eds.), *The Social Science Encyclopedia*, pp. 780-83. London: Routledge.

Harmon, Rachel (2016). Why arrest? *Michigan Law Review*, 113, pp. 307-364.

Weinberg, Darin (2006). Social control, in G. Ritzer (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, pp. 1-5. John Wiley & Sons.

**Week 2:** Jan. 23 & 25, 2024- **Law and Deterrence**

Galbiati, Roberto, and Drago, Francesco (2014). Deterrent effect of imprisonment, in G. Bruinsma and D. Weisburd (eds.), *The Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice*, pp. 1023-1030. New York, NY: Springer.

Kennedy, David (2019). Policing and the lessons of focused deterrence, in D. Weisburd and A. Braga (eds.), *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*, pp. 205-226. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

**Week 3:** Jan. 30 & Feb 1, 2024- **Therapeutic Justice**

Haskin, Paul A. (2019). Problem- solving courts: Fighting crime by treating the offender. *NIJ Journal* 281, November.

**Week 4:** Feb 6 & Feb 8, 2024- **Risk Assessment**

Rothschild, Elyassi, Koehler, Johann, and Simon, Jonathan (2018). Actuarial justice, in M. Deflem (ed.), *The Handbook of Social Control*, pp. 194-206. John Wiley & Sons.

Shapiro, Aaron (2017). Reform predictive policing. *Nature*, 541, pp. 458-460.

Berk, Richard (2018). A primer on criminal justice risk assessments. *Translational Criminology*, pp. 8-10.

**Week 5:** Feb 13 & Feb 15, 2024- **Order Maintenance Policing**

Wilson, James Q. and George L. Kelling (1982). Broken windows: The police and neighborhood safety.” *The Atlantic Monthly*, March: 29-38.

Weisburd, David and Majmundar, Malay (eds.) (2018). *Proactive policing: Effects on crime and communities*, pp. 142-163. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

**Week 6:** Feb. 20 & 22, 2024- **Discretion in the Criminal Justice System**

Klockars, Carl B. (1985). “Selective Enforcement,” in *The Idea of Police* (pp. 92-119). Newbury Park, CA: Sage. Klockars, Carl B. (1985). “Selective Enforcement,” in *The Idea of Police* (pp. 92-119). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

**Week 7:** Feb 27 & 29, 2024- **Mid-Term Assignment – Perspective Paper 1**

**Week 8:** Mar. 5 & 6, 2024- **Spring Recess – No Class**

**Week 9:** Mar. 12 & 14, 2024- **Guest Speaker & Blind Injustice, Ch. 1 & 2**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Eye Opener. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 1–8). University of California Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.5>

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Denial. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 9–58). University of California Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.6>

**Week 10:** Mar. 19 & 21, 2024- **Blind Injustice, Ch. 3**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Ambition. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 59–89). University of California Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.7>

**Week 11:** Mar. 26 & 28- **Blind Injustice, Ch 4**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Bias. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 90–112). University of California Press.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.8>

**Week 12:** Apr. 2 & 4, 2024- **Blind Injustice, Ch. 5**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Memory. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 113–151). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.9>

**Week 13:** Apr. 9 & 11, 2024- **Blind Injustice, Ch. 6**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Intuition. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 152–169). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.10>

**Week 14:** Apr. 16 & 18, 2024- **Blind Injustice, Ch. 7 & 8**

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Tunnel Vision. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 170–212). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.11>

Godsey, Mark. (2017). Blind Tunnel Vision. In *Blind Injustice: A Former Prosecutor Exposes the Psychology and Politics of Wrongful Convictions* (1st ed., pp. 213–224). University of California Press. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctv1wxqs4.12>

**Week 15:** Apr. 23 & 25, 2024- **Wrap-Up & Final Assignment - Perspective Paper 2**