**The Politics of Crime, Violence, and Policing**PLSC XXX

Loyola University Chicago

Spring 2024

TuTh 2:30 PM - 3:45 PM

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| **Instructor** | Professor G. Agustin Markarian |
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| **Office Location** | 327 Coffey Hall |
| **Office Hours** | 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM TuTh |

**Course Description**

The U.S. has the fourth highest homicide rate among OECD countries, yet it imprisons more people per capita then nearly any other nation in the world. While crime rates have drastically declined since peaking in the early 1990s, American’s concern about crime has remained consistent. And even though movements to reform the criminal justice system have recently grown, Americans continue to prefer more punitive crime policies. Race is central to these issues. Racial minorities, particularly Black Americans, are the most likely to be homicide victims and those imprisoned. Americans’ views of crime are deeply influence by implicit racial biases.

This class surveys these complex topics, delving into dynamics of crime, violence, and policing through multiple angels. Our focus will be primarily within the United States, though I will incorporate research from other countries at various points to develop a more complete perspective. We will explore the multifaceted political, social, and cultural dimensions that shape and are shaped by these phenomena. Through critical examination of historical contexts, contemporary debates, and policy implications, students will gain a comprehensive understanding of the complex dynamics that underlie crime and violence in American society, and the tools of punishment used to combat them. This is primarily a political science course though we will draw from sociology, criminology, economics, and public policy to explore the root causes of violence, the politics of gun control, mass shootings, the criminal justice system, police-community relations, and the politics of crime prevention. We will look at both causes and consequences, and race and ethnicity will be common analytical frameworks through our discussions.

By the end of the course, students will have gained the analytical tools to critically assess the complexities of crime, violence, and policing in the United States, informed by a nuanced understanding of historical, social, and political factors. They will be equipped to engage in informed discussions on policy reforms, social justice, and the broader implications of crime-related issues in contemporary American society.

**Course Requirements Summary**

* Participation (15%)
* Reading presentation (5%)
* Reading quizzes (20%)
* Midterm exams (30% | 2 x 15%)
* Final creative project (30%)

**Course Requirements in Detail**

Participation (10%): Students are expected to participate in activities and in-class discussions of the course material. Students are expected to complete assigned readings before class and come prepared with notes and ideas. I will assess students based on the frequency of contributions, the relevance and insightfulness of the contributions in discussions, and active contributions to group work. Quality of participation can make up for lack of frequency. Please note that attendance is an integral part of discussions. Though there is no formal attendance requirement, you can't join the conversation if you don't show up. Participation in group discussions during class counts towards your participation grade.

Reading presentation (5%): Students will be asked to present a reading on certain days in groups of 3 to 4 people. Reading presentations should about twenty minutes and summarize: 1) the questions the researcher(s) seeks to answer, 2) their proposed theory, 3) the research methods and data they use (as best as you can! This part is hard!), 4) what the researchers find, 5) why this is important and how it fits into the rest of the class. The presentation should end by posing some questions to the class for discussion. Everyone in the group should contribute to the presentation. I will ask you all to privately review group members’ work and indicate how each person contributed. You must sign up to present a paper using the Sakai assignment page by January 30th.

Reading quizzes (25%): There will be many multiple-choice reading quizzes each worth about 1% of your toral grade. They will be graded pass/no pass, with 60% or above-considered passing. Quizzes will be posted on Sakai and must be taken before the start of class. Students can miss two quizzes; no questions asked and still receive full credit. However, late/make-up quizzes will not be accepted under any circumstance.

Two midterm exams (30% | 15% each)

There will be two midterm exams. One on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and one on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Exams will be a combination of multiple choice, key terms, and short answer questions. You can bring a one-page, hand-written “cheat sheet” to the midterms.

Final creative project (30%)

In place of a traditional final exam, this course offers you the opportunity to showcase your comprehensive understanding of one of the learning modules through a final creative project. This project should reflect your engagement with the course material and your ability to synthesize complex concepts into a creative and thought-provoking work. Students can work alone or in a group of up to five people. To ensure alignment with the course objectives, please discuss your creative research project ideas with me by February 28th, 2023.

Your final project must be accompanied by a 1–2-page essay that explains how your creative work connects to one of the learning modules and the key themes explored within. This essay will provide context for your project and demonstrate your critical thinking in applying the course content to your chosen medium.

You have the freedom to select from a variety of creative mediums to convey your project. Here are some suggested options, but feel free to propose an alternative medium that best suits your creative strengths and vision:

* **Short Film:** Produce a short fiction or non-fiction film that explores crime, violence, and policing in the US through compelling visuals and storytelling.
  + Mini-Documentary: Produce a documentary or a series of mini-documentaries that showcase interviews, expert insights, personal stories, and fieldwork related to the course topics.
* **Podcast:** Create a podcast series discussing the politics of crime, violence, and policing, featuring interviews and thoughtful conversations.
* **Comic Book:** Craft a comic book that visually narrates stories related to crime, violence, and policing, challenging perceptions through art and dialogue.
* **Series of Short Stories:** Write short stories that delve into different aspects of crime, violence, and policing, offering varied perspectives on these issues.
* **Collection of Songs:** Compose songs that lyrically engage with crime, violence, and policing, using music to convey emotions and stories.
* Infographic or Data Visualization: Create a visually engaging infographic or data visualization that explores key concepts, statistics, and trends related to crime, violence, and policing in the United States.
* Interactive Website: Build an interactive website that presents information, case studies, and multimedia elements to educate visitors about various aspects of the politics of crime, violence, and policing.
* Photo Essay: Compile a series of powerful photographs with captions that tell a compelling story related to the course themes. You can capture real-world situations, protests, community initiatives, or other relevant subjects.
* Community Engagement Project: Organize a local event, workshop, or discussion panel that raises awareness about the issues covered in the course. Document the event's impact and reflections from participants.
* Art Exhibition: Curate an art exhibition featuring works (paintings, sculptures, installations) that convey different dimensions of crime, violence, and policing and prompt viewers to reflect on these themes.

Creativity is encouraged, so if you have a unique idea not listed here, please discuss it with me by February 28th, 2023, to ensure that it aligns with the course's goals and objectives.

This final project provides you with an opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of course concepts while allowing you to express your insights and interpretations in a creative and engaging manner. Your project will be evaluated based on its alignment with the course content, creativity, execution, and the clarity of your accompanying essay.

Note: Late proposals for creative projects may not be accepted, so please ensure you communicate your ideas within the given timeframe.

**Grade Policies**

Final grades for the course will be based on the following scale.

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| **Letter Grade** | **Percentage Score** |
| A | 93-100 |
| A- | 90-92.99 |
| B+ | 87-89.99 |
| B | 83-86.99 |
| B- | 80-82.99 |
| C+ | 77-79.99 |
| C | 73-76.99 |
| C- | 70-72.99 |
| D+ | 67-69.99 |
| D | 60-66.99 |
| F | 59.99 and below |

The scoring rubric above and the thresholds for various letter grades are non-negotiable. I will not change your numeric grade to “bump you up” to the next letter grade. For example, if your final score in the class is 86.9, your letter grade for the class will be a B, not a B+ just because you are so close. I do this to ensure transparency and fairness in my grading. I view it as problematic to “bump up” or offer special extra credit opportunities to students who ask but not those who do not. Your best bet to ensure you maximize your grade is to show up to class, do the reading, and participate frequently and thoughtfully.

If you have a question or concern about your grade on an assignment or exam, you must contact me within 7 days of receiving the grade. For example, if an exam is returned to you at the end of a Monday class, you have until the end of the following Monday class to contact me. The end of the semester (perhaps when you’re so close to the next letter grade up?) is not an appropriate time to revisit your score on a midterm.

All requests for grade revisions must be reasonable, well-mannered, and focused. Rude requests for revisions and grade-grubbing are not acceptable nor are external excuses for a better grade accepted (i.e. “I need at least a B in this class to graduate on time.”).

**Additional Policies and Notes**

Missing exams/quizzes: If you are not feeling well on the day of an exam, let me know right away. If you are dealing with illness or a family emergency, I will be happy to make accommodations. However, *you must notify me of your situation in a timely manner and provide appropriate documentation*. Given the wide availability of internet access, in virtually all cases, I expect you to contact me before the exam starts if there is an issue.

Office Hours/Getting Help: My regularly scheduled office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 10:20-11:20 AM. You can join me (without an appointment!) in person. If you need to schedule another meeting time or would like to chat via Zoom, email me.

Technology in the classroom: A rapidly growing body of research shows that laptop and table use during class time substantially interfere with learning for both [the user](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0956797616677314) and [peers](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360131512002254). In the past, I did not allow for the use of these technologies. However, some students have claimed that computers and tables support their learning because it facilities note taking. Therefore, I have decided to:

1. *Temporarily* allow computers and tables in class under the condition that they are exclusively used for class-related purposes. This means that electronic devices may not be used to check email, scroll Twitter, buy movie tickets, etc. while in class.
2. If I suspect you are using your electronic device for non-class purposes, I will give you one warning (either in class or over email).
3. If I suspect a second violation of the policy after the initial warning, you will lose the privilege of using your electronic device in class for the rest of the semester.

There may be some days when I will specifically ask you to bring a computer (if there is an online activity, for example). However, most of the class time will involve lectures or discussions of articles and concepts related to the course—this can be accomplished without computers if you wish to (I encourage it).

**The use of cell phones or other mobile communication devices is strictly prohibited during class, except in the event of an emergency or if needed to take a reading quiz.** Cell phones should be kept on silent but preferably should be turned off. Students discovered using their phones during class time will be asked to turn off their phones and place them out of reach.

Students with disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please have the [Student Accessibility Center](https://www.luc.edu/sac/) contact me as soon as possible.

Academic integrity: Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Incidents of plagiarism or cheating on an exam (by copying from another student or other means) will result in a zero on the assignment or exam in question. Severe or repeated incidents may result in failing the course. Please refer to this useful guide if you are unsure when and how to cite your sources. Further details regarding what constitutes academic dishonesty are available here:

[https://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg\_academicintegrity.shtml.](about:blank)

Academic dishonesty will be reported to the chair of your major department and to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Academic misconduct records may be transmitted to medical schools, law schools, and other organizations with a legitimate reason to inquire.

AI software / ChatGPT Policy: we are living in a new world, and we (professors) are doomed to fail if we wage a cold war on AI software without the right tools and education. AI / ChatGPT can be helpful in some cases and detrimental in many others. We are all still learning how to adapt these tools while making sure students are learning and engaging with the material. So here is what I hope is a realistic AI / ChatGPT policy, which I expect you will all respect:

* Use of AI / ChatGPT on quizzes and exams is strictly prohibited.
* AI / ChatGPT may be used to polish writing for other assignments, but not originate it. If students use AI / ChatGPT to polish their writing, they must:
  + Provide an original transcript of the text they fed to the AI software with their submitted assignment. The AI-polished assignment will be graded, but I need to be sure the ideas in the assignment originate in your brain and where not hallucinated by the AI.
  + Note how and where AI was used at the end of your assignment.

Failure to comply with this policy is considered a violation of academic integrity and will be treated as such. You do not have to use these tools, and you will learn more if you don’t.

**Class Schedule and Reading Assignments**

**\*Note that assignments are due before class on the day they are listed.**

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| **Legitimacy of state violence:** *Is violence the natural manifestation of the state? Is the use of violence by the state legitimate? What is the relationship between the state and crime?* | |
| **Tue 01/16** | Syllabus  Weber, M. (1921). Politics as a Vocation. (p. 1-10) |
| **Thu 01/18** | Olson, M. (1993). Dictatorship, democracy, and development. *American political science review*, *87*(3), 567-576. |
| **Tue 01/23** | Tilly, Charles. “War making and state making as organized crime.” In Evans, Peter, Dietrich, Rueschmeyer and Theda Skocpol. Bringing the State Back In. Cambridge University Press, 1985 |
| **Crime and its Causes:** *What is crime? What are the root causes of crime in the United States? What are the causes of criminal organization? How does US policy affect global crime?* | |
| **Thu 01/25** | Federico Varese. 2010. “What is Organized Crime?” in Organized Crime: Volume 1. Routledge. Only pages 14-22. |
| **Tue 01/30** | Anderson, E. (2000). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. WW Norton & Company. (Ch. 1-2) |
| **Thu 02/01** | Anderson, E. (2000). *Code of the street: Decency, violence, and the moral life of the inner city*. WW Norton & Company. (Ch. 3-4) |
| **Tue 02/06** | [Freakonomics Radio. Episode 384: Abortion and Crime, Revisited (Update).](https://freakonomics.com/podcast/abortion-and-crime-revisited-update/) |
| **Thu 02/08** | Lankford, A., & Silver, J. (2020). Why have public mass shootings become more deadly? Assessing how perpetrators’ motives and methods have changed over time. *Criminology & Public Policy*, *19*(1), 37-60. |
| **Tue 02/13** | Trejo, G., & Ley, S. (2017). Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence. Comparative Political Studies  **OR**  Maria Micaela Sviatschi. 2020. “Spreading Gangs: Exporting US Criminal Capital to El Salvador.” The Economic Review. |
| **Thu 02/15** | ***In class project work – come prepared.*** |
| **Public Opinion and Crime:** *How does the public feel about crime and criminal justice policy? What shapes public opinion on crime?* | |
| **Tue 02/20** | Pickett, J. T. (2019). Public opinion and criminal justice policy: Theory and research. *Annual Review of Criminology*, *2*, 405-428. |
| **Thu 02/22** | Unnever, J. D., Cullen, F. T., & Jones, J. D. (2008). Public support for attacking the “root causes” of crime: The impact of egalitarian and racial beliefs. Sociological Focus, 41(1), 1-33. |
| **Tue 02/27** | Stabile, C. A. (2023). White victims, black villains: Gender, race, and crime news in US culture. Taylor & Francis. (CH1- CH2) |
| **Thu 03/01** | **Midterm 1** |
| **Tue 03/07** | ***Springs Break*** |
| **Thu 03/08** | ***Springs Break*** |
| **Gun Politics in the United States:** *How unique is US gun policy and politics? What are the consequence of US gun policy? What factors shape US gun politics? How have the politics of guns changed overtime and why?* | |
| **Tue 03/13** | Movie: Bowling for Columbine. (2002). Michael Moore. |
| **Thu 03/15** | Yamane, D., Yamane, P., & Ivory, S. L. (2020). Targeted advertising: documenting the emergence of gun culture 2.0 in guns magazine, 1955–2019. *Palgrave communications*, *6*(1), 1-9. |
| **Tue 03/20** | Cramer, C. E. (1994). The racist roots of gun control. *Kan. JL & Pub. Pol'y*, *4*, 17.  **OR**  Filindra, Alexandra, and Noah J. Kaplan. "Racial resentment and whites’ gun policy preferences in contemporary America." *Political behavior* 38 (2016): 255-275. |
| **Thu 03/22** | Newman, B. J., & Hartman, T. K. (2019). Mass shootings and public support for gun control. *British Journal of Political Science*, *49*(4), 1527-1553.  **OR**  Hassell, H. J., Holbein, J. B., & Baldwin, M. (2020). Mobilize for our lives? School shootings and democratic accountability in US elections. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(4), 1375-1385. |
| **Tue 03/27** | Walker, H., Collingwood, L., & Bunyasi, T. L. (2020). White response to black death: a racialized theory of white attitudes towards gun control. *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, *17*(1), 165-188. |
| **Policing strategies:** *How does the US address crime? What are the consequences of these strategies? How effective have these strategies been in reducing crime? What are some potential issues resulting from these strategies?* | |
| **Thu 03/29** | Alexander, M. (2012). The new Jim Crow: Mass incarceration in the age of colorblindness. The New Press. Chapters 1-2 |
| **Tue 04/03** | [George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson. Broken Windows. The Atlantic.](https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1982/03/broken-windows/304465/)  [Roeder, O. K., Eisen, L.-B., Bowling, J., Stiglitz, J. E., and Chettiar, I. M. (2015). What caused the crime decline? Brennan Center for Justice](https://www.brennancenter.org/media/230/download) |
| **Thu 04/05** | ***In class project work – come prepared – instructor at a conference.*** |
| **Tue 04/10** | Mummolo, Jonathon, “Modern Police Tactics, Police Citizen Interactions, and the Prospect for Reform,” Journal of Politics (2017)loc |
| **Thu 04/12** | [United States Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division (2015). Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department.](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/opa/press-releases/attachments/2015/03/04/ferguson_police_department_report.pdf) |
| **Carceral state and politics:** *What are the political consequences of US carceral policies? How has the public responded to mass incarceration and episodes of police violence? Are these responses effective at influencing policy change?* | |
| **Tue 04/17** | Weaver, V. M., & Lerman, A. E. (2010). Political consequences of the carceral state. *American Political Science Review*, *104*(4), 817-833.  **OR**  Burch, T. (2013). *Trading democracy for justice: Criminal convictions and the decline of neighborhood political participation*. University of Chicago press. (CH. 1-2) |
| **Thu 04/19** | Reny, T. T., & Newman, B. J. (2021). The opinion-mobilizing effect of social protest against police violence: Evidence from the 2020 George Floyd protests. *American political science review*, *115*(4), 1499-1507. |
| **Tue 04/24** | Wasow, O. (2020). Agenda seeding: How 1960s black protests moved elites, public opinion and voting. *American Political Science Review*, *114*(3), 638-659. |
| **Thu 04/26** | **Midterm 2** |

**Changes to the Syllabus**

I reserve the right to make changes to this syllabus at any time. If changes are made, students will be informed through email and verbally in class, and a new syllabus document will be posted on Sakai.