

## Criminal Justice 496: Special Topics: Crime and the Big City

Syllabus Fall 2011

Professor: Patrick Carr

Class Time: Mon-Wed 1.40-3.00

Room: LSH B115

Office: LSH A355

Office Hours: Monday 11.30-12.30 3.15-4.15, Wednesday 3.15-4.15 and by appointment

E-mail: [pcarr@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:pcarr@rci.rutgers.edu)

Course Web Site: <https://sakai.rutgers.edu>

### Required Reading

Peter Moskos, *Cop in the Hood: My Year Policing Baltimore's Eastern District*, Princeton University Press, 2009 (paperback edition) ISBN 13: 978-0691143866

David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*, Bantam Books, 1997 ISBN 13: 9780767900317

Paul Tough *Whatever it Takes: Geoffrey Canada's Quest to Change Harlem and America*, Houghton Mifflin 2008, ISBN 13: 9780618569892

**Note on Buying Books:** I have tried to choose books that are relatively cheap in price, but I realize that not everyone will have the budget to buy them. Some are available second hand for a smaller price, and, in certain circumstances, I can make a loaner copy available to you on a needs assessed basis.

### Course Description

Why is crime, especially violent crime, predominantly a big city problem? And why, even within big cities, is crime concentrated only in certain areas? As homicide rates in some big cities declined in the 1990s, other similar places experienced an alarming increase in violent crime. Why is there such a disparity between places and what can we learn from case studies to better combat rising rates of violent crime?

This course will explore the phenomenon of big city violent crime by examining the experience of Philadelphia over the past two decades. The course will be a combination of readings, discussion and field immersion as we get to see first hand what drives crime in a major city, and what is being done to try and reduce it. Students will have the opportunity to visit a level one trauma center, to speak with homicide detectives and DA's, and to see firsthand some of the on-the-ground efforts to reduce violence.

In this course, students will get a chance to investigate in-depth one of society's most persistent and least publicized problems, and some of the issues we will discuss are the proximate and underlying causes of serious crime, the primary big city responses to violent

crime, the Stop Snitching Movement, and the various programs aimed at reducing crime that have been tried in the past two decades. Over the course of the semester students will come to appreciate the complexities of the big city crime problem and the real difficulties in crafting a response that will actually reduce crime.

I am treating this course as a seminar and will conduct it as such-which means that we all come to class prepared and ready to discuss the readings, news items, video clips or whatever material it is that we are covering.

### **Learning Goals**

The Program Committee for the Program in Criminal Justice at Rutgers University in New Brunswick has adopted a series of learning goals for students who complete the major. These goals represent the consensus of the faculty regarding the concepts a student should grasp and the skills a student should acquire in the course of completing the major. These goals guide the choices faculty make about the structure of the curriculum and the requirements for our majors. Moreover, they guide faculty and instructors preparing course material and teaching courses.

The Program in Criminal Justice will provide students with a rich understanding of crime and criminal justice in the United States and abroad through an interdisciplinary approach that blends a strong liberal arts educational experience with pre-professional instruction in the field of criminal justice. Graduates of the program will be well-informed citizens on the topic of crime and justice, and qualified for graduate study or for employment as practitioners in a variety of legal, policymaking, and law enforcement fields.

Criminal justice majors graduating from a research university should be able to use critical thinking, factual inquiry, and the scientific approach to solve problems related to individual and group behavior. In addition, students should have an understanding of the legal, political and policymaking processes that affect criminal justice systems in the United States and elsewhere in the world. Finally, students should be familiar with the institutional structures and latest developments in the field in order to engage in meaningful debate about current public policy issues.

### **Learning Goals for Criminal Justice Majors**

#### **1. Competence:**

- a.) **Theory.** Students who complete the major in criminal justice should understand and be able to articulate, both orally and in writing, the core theoretical concepts that form the foundation of analysis and research in criminology and criminal justice today. Core concepts are derived from explanations of crime from a variety of perspectives, including biogenic, psychological, and sociological approaches. There are myriad theories of crime that are informed by these perspectives, including, classical, control, critical, ecology, labeling, learning, strain, and trait-based approaches. Theoretical literacy should extend to multicultural and international understanding.
- b.) **Institutions.** Students who complete the major in criminal justice should understand the special role of three types of institutions: Police, Corrections,

and Courts. In addition, students should know how institutional forms vary across jurisdictions and how these institutions interact with and influence each other.

- c.) **Research Methods.** Students who complete the criminal justice major should be familiar with the tools, techniques, and data sources necessary for empirical analysis. Students should understand the various ways that empirical analysis is used in the scientific approach: for description, for developing, and for testing theories. They should be able to analyze data using computer applications and should be familiar with basic statistical techniques and regression analysis. They should be able to read and assess research from a wide range of sources, including general interest, academic, and government publications.
2. **Critical Thinking:** Upon completion of the major students should be able to apply their understanding of core concepts and quantitative tools to analyze and research real world problems, and evaluate alternative policy proposals on a range of criminal justice issues, from micro-level analyses relevant to particular cases to management concerns to macro-level analyses of legislative and other broad-scale policies. Accomplishment of this goal will require that students can apply their literacy and numeracy skills to different institutional structures, within the U.S. and across countries.
3. **Scholarship:** Qualified majors should have an opportunity through such avenues as advanced coursework, internships, and faculty interactions to conduct independent research on matters of central relevance to the field of criminal justice.

### **Attendance Policy**

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Attendance is an important part of your 15% participation grade

### **A Note on the Use of Laptops/Tablets in Class**

I realize that laptops are useful devices-I even own a couple of them-and that some students like to fire them up in class to take notes. However, in many cases these devices are used to surf the web, check Facebook updates and compose emails during class, none of which is acceptable behavior. I do not prohibit the use of these devices but I pretty much always know when you are using them in ways other than for taking notes, and that is a surefire way to quickly burn your 15% participation grade.

### **Statement on student disability**

In accordance with University policy, if you have a documented disability and require accommodations to obtain equal access in this course, please contact me at the beginning of the semester or when given an assignment for which an accommodation is required.

Students with disabilities must verify eligibility through the Office of Student Disability Services.

### **Requirements**

In addition to the regular and active participation that is standard for any small seminar, there are a number of basic requirements for this course, which include writing two short reaction papers, completing a group project, a mid-term and a final examination.

### **Group Project:**

The group project is designed to give you an opportunity to create a “digital short” presentation on topics related to crime in the city, weaving in materials from the course. Though I use Philadelphia as the source for much of my material, you are not limited to this one city. There will be 7 groups of approximately 5 people and group selection will be done randomly at the end of October. From November 2, I will allot 20 minutes of each Wednesday class period for group discussion, because I know it will be difficult for you all to find time outside of class to meet. Each group will have the opportunity to present their digital shorts to the class from November 30 through December 7. Your grade for the digital short will be divided as follows-half will be for the final product, including presentation to the class, and half will be for the effort you personally brought to the group. The “effort” grade is assessed by each person filling out a grade sheet both for themselves and fellow group members, where you assign a letter grade to everyone including you, and then add a sentence justifying each grade. This is done to offset the free rider problem and to recognize the people putting the most effort in.  
(20% of grade)

**Papers:** Each student will have the opportunity to write two reaction papers on any topic, issue, or speaker that is visited, discussed, heard or experienced in the course. Typically these papers will be 4-5 pages in length and will contextualize the student’s reaction in light of what he or she has learned in the course. The reaction papers have rolling deadlines in that students can hand them in at any time, but the first paper must be handed in by September 28 at the latest and the second one has to be in by October 31. (20% of grade-2 X 10%)

**NOTE: All written assignments are due in class (hard copy) only. I do not accept emailed assignments and any assignment that is late is penalized one half letter grade for every day or part thereof for which it is late.**

**Midterm Examination:** There will be an in-class midterm examination on **October 19** and it will be a short essay exam that will cover material up to that point in the course. The exam will be based on review questions that I will post on the sakai site. (20% of grade)

### **Missing an Exam or Being Late for an Exam**

If you miss an exam without discussing with me the circumstances that preclude attendance BEFORE the exam is administered, you will fail that exam. It is only under the most extraordinary of circumstances that I will administer a make-up. Also, please be advised that I never change grades.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** If you arrive at an exam after the first student has finished and left, you will not be permitted to sit the exam at that time. This is to ensure the integrity of the examination and reduce the temptation to cheat.

**Course Project/Final:** The project is an independently researched original work based on any aspect of the course. It could be a comprehensive literature review, or an in-depth interview study of a particular aspect of crime and the big city, or it could be a profile of your own city that uses course materials to interpret crime and justice there. Basically, you have (within reason) a blank slate to do something that interests you. I will set aside class time to workshop ideas and for students to work on their projects collectively. The project will be due at the time of the final examination on December 21, and is in lieu of a written examination. (25% of grade)

**Regular and Active Participation:** Each student is expected to be a regular and active contributor to class discussions, which means that students must come to class prepared to discuss readings, reactions to special lectures, events and field trips and to contribute to the overall engagement of the seminar. (15% of grade)

### **Class Schedule**

NOTE: I hope to bring in several guest speakers, and much will depend on their schedules and availability. Though I have made every effort to set up this schedule in advance all times and dates are subject to change. I have left two dates open at the end of the semester for visits but these may be brought forward at short notice.

### **Introduction: Crime and Big Cities**

- Sep 7 Introduction to the Course  
Big City-Big Problems: The Philadelphia Story  
Reading: Gregory “You Wouldn’t Snitch Either” Kefalas et al. “To Snitch or Not to Snitch”; Kefalas and Carr “Philly Teen Mobs: Why Aren’t Young People Part of the Conversation?”
- Sep 8 **N.B. Thursday Class for Monday**  
How Did Things Get So Bad? History, Politics and Bad Decisions  
Reading: Wilson (online)
- Sep. 12 What is Urban Crime? The Case Study of the Corner  
Reading: Simon and Burns “Winter”
- Sep 14 The Drug Trade and the User  
Reading: Simon and Burns “Spring”
- Sep. 17 The Drug Trade and the Slinger  
Reading: Simon and Burns “Summer”
- Sep. 19 The War on Drugs

- Reading: Simon and Burns “Fall”
- Sep. 21 Crime Control and the City: What do Kids Think?  
Reading: Carr, Napolitano and Keating (online); Brunson and Miller (online)
- Sep. 26 Crime Control and the City: Is Stop and Frisk the Answer  
Reading: Sherman (online); Carr (online); Fagan (online)
- Sep. 28 Crime Control and the City: A View from the Police  
Reading: Moskos chapters 1-2

**First Reaction Paper Due in Class Hard copy only**

- Oct. 3 Policing the Corner  
Reading: Moskos chapter 3-4
- Oct. 5 Patrol and Arrest: Reaction and Discretion  
Reading: Moskos chapters 5-6
- Oct. 10 Policing the War on Drugs  
Reading: Moskos chapter 7 and epilogue
- Oct. 12 Why is Crime so Entrenched in Our Big Cities: What Have we Learned from Philly and Baltimore?  
Class Discussion and Review
- Oct. 17 Workshop on Term Projects and midterm review
- Oct. 19 **In class midterm examination**
- Oct. 24 Can We Fix Our Cities?  
Reading: Tough, chapter 1
- Oct. 26 One Approach  
Reading: Tough, chapter 2
- Oct. 31 Where do you Start?  
Reading: Tough, chapter 3  
**Second Reaction paper Due in Class-hard copy only**
- Nov. 2 The wrap around Approach  
Reading: Tough, chapters 4-5
- Nov. 7-9 What do you Do With the Bad Apples?  
Reading: Tough, chapters 6-7
- Nov. 14 Getting Through

Reading: Tough, chapters 9-10

Nov. 16 DVD- *Waiting for Superman*

Nov. 21 Can Geoff Canada's Approach Work?  
Reading: Tough, chapter 11

Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 28 Guest Speaker-TBA

Nov. 30 Guest Speaker-TBA

Dec. 5 Group Presentations A-C

Dec. 7 Group Presentations D-F

Dec. 12 Group Presentations G, and Final Discussion

Dec. 21<sup>st</sup> **Final Exam 8-11 AM Hand in Projects here**