U.S. Policing: Context, Approaches, and Challenges

Department of Political Science 401 - Spring 2016
Room: Van Hise 594
Tuesdays 1:00-2:15 P.M. & Thursdays 1:00-2:15 P.M.

Instructor: Emma Frankham
Email: frankham@wisc.edu

Please note: I will typically respond within 24 hours although at the weekends it may be longer. If your email is lengthy it is likely that you will need to come to office hours so that we can discuss your query more fully.

Office Hours: Tuesdays 2:30-4:30 P.M. Education Building (main foyer). Otherwise by appointment.

Course Description:
The class will be divided into three sections. Firstly, the class will consider U.S. policing in historical context as well as the role of police in democratic society. The second section will focus on policing strategies. Finally, the class will examine contemporary challenges to U.S. policing, including challenges with regard to racial disparities in policing, police militarization, and mental health and policing. The goal of the class is to encourage students to think critically and creatively about U.S. policing today.

Course Learning Outcomes
- The ability to place key decisions and developments in broader social, cultural, and historical context.
- Be able to engage in reasoned, well-organised, and sustained discussions of important issues or questions, including the ability to explain and evaluate different or opposing perspectives evenhandedly.
- Pose meaningful questions that advance knowledge and understanding.
- Make connections among diverse subject areas and modes of thinking.
- Apply the major areas of knowledge to the solution of individual and community problems.
- Critically evaluate information, integrating that information into frameworks of knowledge studied in the class.

Course Requirements
Grades in the course will be based on the following components:

a.) Presentation (20%)
Students will do a presentation in groups of 4. Presentations should be 15 minutes in length. Presentation ideas: Discussion questions, a quiz, class activity, small group work, handout(s), audio clip, video clip, media report, journal article, book excerpt, personal experience/anecdote, word associations, classroom opinion polls, picture prompts, a case study etc. You may use powerpoint but you don’t have to.
Presentation topics: race and policing, police militarization, and mental health and policing. Presentations will be graded on a check (20%) check minus (15%) or absent (0%) basis.

b.) 1st Midterm (25%)
The first midterm is a reflection paper. All students will complete an online simulation exercise designed for police agencies. Following the completion of this exercise you will write a report in class. I will give further details nearer the time.

c.) 2nd Midterm (25%)
The second midterm will consist of short answer questions.

d.) Final exam (12th May 2016 5:05-7:05pm) (30%)
The final exam will be a combination of short answer questions, an essay question, and a critical analysis of a media report.

Course Policies
Accommodations: Please notify me in the first three weeks of the semester if you require any course accommodations.

Class conduct: Some of the topics we will be discussing in this class are politicised and, at times, emotive. Debate and discussion is encouraged within a framework of respect for fellow students.

Readings: Come to class with copies of the readings (paper or electronic). I highly recommend Mendeley, for organising your readings and notes. It is available to download for free at: https://www.mendeley.com

Section A : U.S. Policing in Historical Context

January 19: Introduction

January 21: Principles of Policing in a Democracy
Peel, R. (1829) Principles of Policing

January 26: Characterizing U.S. Police Eras (I)

January 28: Characterizing U.S. Police Eras (II)
Section B: Policing Strategies

February 2: Problem-Oriented Policing

February 4: Problem-Oriented Policing—Examples

February 9: Community Policing

February 11: The Politics of Community Policing

February 16: Guest Speakers
Sgt Jennifer Kane and Police Officer Eugene Woehrle (Madison PD)

February 18: ‘Broken Windows’ Theory

February 23: 1st Midterm Writing Class
Guest: Stephanie Larson (Writing Center, UW—Madison)

February 25: 1st Midterm

March 1: Evaluating ‘Broken Windows’ Theory

Section C: Selected 21st Century Challenges to Policing

March 3: Racial Biases in Policing
Department of Justice (2015) Investigation of the Ferguson Police Department.

March 8: Challenges in Evaluating Racial Biases in Policing
Available at http://repository.law.umich.edu/law_econ_current/110

March 10: Critical Reading of a Media Report

March 15: 2nd Midterm

March 17: Guest Speaker
Prof. Pamela Oliver (Sociology Department, UW—Madison)
SPRING RECESS

March 29: Presentation Day (Race and Policing)

March 31: The History of U.S. Police Militarization

April 5: Militarization and Approaches to Policing

April 7: Use of Less-lethal Weapons

April 12: Guest Speaker TBA

April 14: Presentation Day (Police Militarization)

April 19: Mental Health and Policing


Washington Post database of every fatal shooting in the United States by a police officer in the line of duty from 2015-present.

Includes information on more than a dozen details about each killing — including the race of the deceased, the circumstances of the shooting, and whether the person was armed.

Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/police-shootings/

April 21: Mental Health and Policing: CIT
Crisis Intervention Team training Curriculum document (on Learn@UW)

April 26: Mental Health and Policing: CIT Effectiveness

April 28: Presentation Day (Mental Health and Policing)

May 3: Exam Workshop

May 5: Class Overview