

EXAMINING URBAN CRIME, POLICING, POLITICS, AND DELINQUENCY THROUGH *THE WIRE*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE 591  
Fall 2008

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Office Hours by appointment

The purpose of this seminar is to examine a number criminal justice- related issues facing those who live and work in large American cities. The seminar will examine the social scientific literature involving a number of issues including:

- The politics associated with the operation of a major urban police department.
- The nature of community perception of local policing activities and behavior.
- The development of police officer belief systems.
- The effectiveness of targeted law enforcement efforts to limit the distribution of drugs.
- The development and operation of urban drug gangs.
- The causes and effects of delinquent behavior by adolescents living in the inner city.

As a backdrop for the seminar, we will be watching two seasons of the television series *The Wire*, which follows police officers, drug dealers, and citizens of Baltimore, Maryland. The reason for using a television series as a backdrop for a seminar is that it allows us to visualize items discussed in the social science literature that few of us have actually seen first-hand. I believe *The Wire* provides a sufficiently valid, vivid, and unbiased view of life in urban America to make for a very effective tool for learning about the issues discussed above.

**Required Texts**

Anderson, Elijah (1999). *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Venkatesh, Sudir (2007) *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. New York: Penguin Press.

The Wire Season 3

The Wire Season 4

Readings hosted on Blackboard (<http://blackboard.wsu.edu/>)

**Course Requirements**

Research paper	100 points	(40%)
In class presentation	25 points	(10%)
Two short papers	100 points	(40%)
Participation	25 points	(10%)

**SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS**

**WEEK ONE August 28 Introduction**

**WEEK TWO September 4 Drug Markets**

The Wire Season 3 Episodes 2 and 3

**Readings**

Pearson, G and D. Hobbs (2003). "King Pin? A Case Study of a Middle Market Drug Broker," *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 42:335.

Curtis, R. and Wendel, T. (2007) "You're always training the dog: Strategic interventions to reconfigure drug markets," *Journal of Drug Issues*, 7: 867-892.

Preble, E. and J. Casey (1969). "Taking Care of Business: The Heroin User's Life on the Street," in *It's So Good, Don't Even Try It Once*, p. 97-118, D. Smith and G. Gay, eds.

Johnson, B.D. and Natarajan, M. (1995). "Strategies to avoid arrest: Crack sellers' response to intensified policing," *American Journal of Police*, 14: 49-69.

**WEEK THREE September 11 CompStat**

The Wire Season 3 Episodes 4 and 5

**Readings**

Willis, J.J., Mastrofski, S.D., and Weisburd, D. (2004). "Compstat and bureaucracy: A case study of challenges and outcomes for change," *Justice Quarterly* 21: 463-496.

Eterno, J.A. and E. Silverman (2006). "The New York City Police Department's Compstat: Dream or nightmare?" *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 8: 218.

Vito, G. Waklsh, W.F. and J. Junselman (2005). "Compstat: The manager's perspective," *International Journal of Police Science & Management* 7: 187.

Holian, M. (2007). "Compstat, Community Policing and The Science of Success A Market-Based Approach to Police Management," *Economic Affairs* 27: 23.

**WEEK FOUR September 18 Police Behavior and Attitudes**

The Wire Season 3 Episodes 6 7 and 8

### Readings

- Van Maanen, J. (1974). "Working the street; a developmental view of police behavior" in Jacob, H. *The Potential for Reform in Criminal Justice System*.
- Reuss-Ianni, E. and F.A. J. Ianni (1983). "Street Cops and Management Cops: The Two Cultures of Policing."
- Micucci, A.J. and Gomme, I.M. (2005). "American police and subcultural support for the use of excessive force." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 33: 487-500.
- Riksheim, E.C. and Chermak, S. M. (1993). "Causes of police behavior revisited." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 21: 353-382.
- Worden, R. (1995). "Police officers' belief systems: A framework for analysis." *American Journal of Police* 14: 49-81.

### **WEEK FIVE September 25 Policing the Drug War**

The Wire Season 3 Episodes 9 and 10

### Readings

- Dorn, N. (2000). "Performance Management Indicators and Drug Enforcement: In the Crossfire or at the Crossroads?" in: M. Natarajan and M. Hough (Eds.), *Illegal Drug Markets: From Research to Prevention Policy (Crime Prevention Studies Volume 11)*, New York: Criminal Justice Press.
- Lawton, B.A., Taylor, R.B., and Luongo, A.J. (2005). "Police officers on drug corners in Philadelphia, drug crime, and violent crime: intended, diffusion and displacement impacts." *Justice Quarterly* 22: 427-451.
- McCabe, J. (2008). "What Works in Policing? The Relationship Between Drug Enforcement and Serious Crime." *Police Quarterly* 11: 289.
- Mazerolle, L., D. Soole and S. Rombouts *Crime Prevention Research Reviews No. 1. Disrupting Street-Level Drug Markets*
- Weisburd, D. and Mazerolle, L.G. (2000). "Crime and disorder in drug hot spots: Implications for theory and practice in policing." *Police Quarterly* 3: 331-349.

### **WEEK SIX October 2 Decriminalization of Drugs**

The Wire Season 3 Episodes 11 and 12

### Readings

- Husak, D. (2003). "Drug legalization: Four points about drug decriminalization." *Criminal Justice Ethics* Winter/Spring 2003: 21-29.
- Kleber, H.D. (2005). "Changing the battle plan." *The Journal of Trauma Injury, Infection and Critical Care* 59: S33-S36.
- Sher, G. (2003). "On the decriminalization of drugs." *Criminal Justice Ethics* Winter/Spring 2003: 30-33.
- Inciardi, J.A., McBride, D.C., McCoy, C.B., Surratt, H.L., and Saum, C.A. "Violence, street crime and the drug legalization debate: A perspective and commentary on the U.S. experience;" *Studies on Crime and Crime Prevention* 105-118
- Wilson, J.Q. "Against the Legalization of Drugs," *Commentary*, 89, No. 2.

### **WEEK SEVEN October 9 Politics and Policing**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 1 and 2

### Readings

- Davies, H.J. (2007). "Understanding variations in murder clearance rates: The influence of the political environment," *Homicide Studies* 11: 133-150.
- Newburn, T. and Jones, T. (2007). "Symbolizing crime control: Reflections on zero tolerance," *Theoretical Criminology* 11: 221-243.
- Seidman, D. and Couzens, M. (1974). "Getting the crime rate down: Political pressure and crime reporting," *Law and Society Review* 3: 457-493.
- Stucky, T.D. (2003). "Local politics and violent crime in U.S. cities," *Criminology* 41: 1101-1136.

### **WEEK EIGHT October 16 Gang Life**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 3 and 4

### Readings

- Venkatesh, S. (2007) *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*.

### **WEEK NINE October 23 Growing up the Inner City**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 5 6 and 7

### Readings

- Tinsley Li, S., K.M. Nussbaum and M.H. Richards (2007). "Risk and protective factors for urban African-American youth," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 39: 21.
- Hill, K.G., Howell, J.C., Hawkins, J.D., and Battin-Pearson, S.R. (1999). "Childhood risk factors for adolescent gang membership: Results from the Seattle social development project," *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 36: 300-322.
- Cassidy, E.F. and H.C. Stevenson (2005). "They wear the mask: Hypermasculinity and hypervulnerability among African American males in an urban remedial disciplinary school," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 11, 53-74.

Slaby, R. (1997). "Psychological mediators of violence in urban youth," in McCord, J. *Violence and children in the inner city*.

**WEEK TEN October 30 Code of the Street**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 8 and 9

**Readings**

Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*.

**WEEK ELEVEN November 6 Examining the Code and Youth Violence**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 10 and 11

**Readings**

Brezina, T., Agnew, R., Cullen, F.T., and Wright, J.P. (2004). "The code of the street: A quantitative assessment of Elijah Anderson's subculture of violence thesis and its contribution to youth violence research," *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 2: 303.

Stewart, E.A and R. Simons (2006), "Structure and Culture in African-American Adolescent Violence: A Partial Test of the "Code of the Street" Thesis," *Justice Quarterly* 23: 1.

Copeland-Linder, N., Jones, V., Haynie, D., Simons-Morton, B., Wright, J., and Cheng, T.L. (2007). "Factors associated with retaliatory attitudes among African-American adolescents who have been assaulted." *Journal of Pediatric Psychology* 32: 760-770.

Silverman, D. (2004). "Street Crime And Street Culture" *International Economic Review* 45: 761.

**WEEK TWELVE November 13 Police and Trust in the Urban Community**

The Wire Season 4 Episodes 12 and 13

**Readings**

Bayley, D.H. (2002). "Law enforcement and the rule of law: Is there a tradeoff?" *Criminology & Public Policy* 2: 133-154.

Kane, R.J (2005). "Compromised Police Legitimacy as a Predictor of Violent Crime in Structurally Disadvantaged Communities" *Criminology*, 43: 469.

Goldsmith, A. (2007) "Police reform and the problem of trust" *Theoretical Criminology*, 9: 443.

Tyler, T. (2004). "Enhancing police legitimacy." *ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* , 593: 84-99.

Sunshine, J. and T. Tyler (2003). "The Role of Procedural Justice and Legitimacy in Shaping Public Support for Policing," *Law and Society Review*, 37: 513.