

SO2G8-15 Policing and Society

24/25

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Shona Robinson-Edwards

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This interdisciplinary module seeks to critically explore the relationship between policing and society. We will think critically about police-community relations and the organisational, cultural, political and social factors that influence and shape these relations. Students will be introduced to the historical and political developments that have influenced policing philosophies and practices around the world. Contemporary issues and debates concerning police use of force, police accountability and legitimacy will also be discussed.

Recent events, such as protests against police violence in the United States, Nigeria, Hong Kong, France, Colombia, and other countries, coupled with debates on racism within the police in the UK, highlight the importance of problematising certain trends and patterns in policing and police work. Students will therefore be taught to evaluate reform agendas, the relationship between the police and other public and private institutions, and engage with critical perspectives that call for defunding and abolition. While much of the scholarship on policing focuses on western democracies, we will also explore policing and police cultures in non-democratic contexts and in the developing world.

Module aims

This module seeks to provide students with an introduction to the meaning, purposes and limits of policing. In this research-led module, we will critically explore and analyse policing foundations,

structures and practices in different international systems. Issues and challenges in contemporary policing, such as use of force, militarisation, racism, and public trust, will be situated within their broader social, historical, political and economic contexts, in the UK as well as in other jurisdictions around the world. We will also look at the key concepts, theories and arguments that emerge out of policing scholarship and literature. Connected to this, we will evaluate the existing ideas guiding police reform, such as procedural justice and police legitimacy, community policing, and democratic policing, as well as critical perspectives that call for defunding and abolition. In addition to key readings and scholarship, students will also be introduced to relevant cases, videos, podcasts, and other mediums through which they can better understand what policing organisations (public and private) do, why, and under what circumstances. The cases and contexts discussed in this module will draw upon evidence from across jurisdictions and incorporate research from the global South, including but not limited to perspectives on policing from Latin America, Asia, and Africa.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Part 01 – Foundations and Concepts

1. Definitions, Origins, Evolution and Development
2. Police Power and Organisational Culture
3. Role, Functions, and Models of Policing
4. Colonial and Postcolonial Policing
5. Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and Public Trust

Part 02 – Challenges, Trends and Debates

1. Players and Partnerships: Public and Private Policing
2. Contemporary Issues and Critical Perspectives
3. Reform, Defund, or Abolish?
4. Module Review and Assignment Discussion

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Develop an understanding of policing and law enforcement in different contexts;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the key concepts, theories, values and ideas guiding policing organisations in the United Kingdom and in other jurisdictions;
- Learn how historical, global, political and social forces and processes shape how societies are policed;
- Develop an understanding of contemporary issues and challenges in policing;
- Appreciate how a diversity of issues, such as class, race and gender, affect the culture of policing;
- Demonstrate an understanding of different models and styles of policing and how they impact police-community relations;

- Critically analyse contemporary developments in policing, as well as trends and patterns such as police militarisation;
- Analyse and evaluate the tensions between police accountability, legitimacy, and public trust in the police;
- Develop skills in assessing and evaluating relevant literature for seminar discussions, presentations, independent study, research and essay writing;
- Develop skills in engaging with mediums such as news and current affairs, podcasts, and media representations of the police, in order to connect academic research and debates to current events and cases.

Indicative reading list

1. Beek, J. et al. 2017. *Police in Africa*. London: Hurst & Co.
2. Bittner, E. 1970. Popular conceptions about the character of police work. In, Bittner, E., *The Functions of the Police in Modern Society*. Chevy Chase, Maryland: National Institute of Mental Health, pp. 6-14.
3. Bradford, B., Jauregui, B., Loader, I., and Steinberg, J. 2016. *The SAGE Handbook of Global Policing*. London: SAGE.
4. Chan, J. 1996. Changing Police Culture. *British Journal of Criminology*, 36(1), 109-134.
5. Elliot-Cooper, A. 2021. *Black Resistance to British Policing*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
6. Fassin, D. 2013. *Enforcing Order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
7. Gonzales, Y. 2020. *Authoritarian Police in Democracy*. Cambridge University Press.
8. Hall, S. 1979. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan.
9. Loader, I. 2006. Policing, recognition, and belonging. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 605, 201-221.
10. Loftus, B. 2009. Police occupational culture: Classic themes, altered times. *Policing and Society*, 20(1), 1-20.
11. McDowell, M. G., and Fernandez, L. A. 2018. 'Disband, Disempower, and Disarm': Amplifying the theory and practice of police abolition. *Critical Criminology*, 26, 373-391.
12. Mummolo, J. 2019. 'Militarization fails to enhance public safety or reduce crime but may harm police reputation'. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 15(37): 9181-9186.
13. Newburn, T. 2005. *Policing: Key Readings*. Devon, UK: Willan Publishing.
14. Parmar, A. 2019. Policing Migration and Racial Technologies. *British Journal of Criminology*, 59(4), 938-957.
15. Reiner, R. 2010. *The Politics of the Police*, 4th edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
16. Tyler, T. 2003. Procedural Justice, Legitimacy, and the Effective Rule of Law. *Crime and Justice*, 30, 283-257.
17. Vitale, A. 2017. *The End of Policing*. Verso Books.
18. Weber, L. 2020. 'My Kids Won't Grow up Here': Policing, bordering and belonging. *Theoretical Criminology*, 24(1), 71-89.

Research element

Students taking this module will need to engage actively with empirical and theoretical research on police and policing for coursework and weekly presentations.

Interdisciplinary

This module draws from sociology, criminology, law, and politics.

International

This module will focus not just on policing in the UK and other Anglo-American contexts, but also draw upon cases and examples from other jurisdictions, particularly those in the global South, such as Latin America, Africa, and South Asia.

Subject specific skills

1. Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts, models, and frameworks in policing scholarship;
2. Demonstrate an appreciation of the diversity and range of policing styles, practices, approaches and trends in a global context;
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical, political, and colonial origins of contemporary policing;
4. Appreciate how class, race, and gender affect police culture;
5. Critically evaluate and assess contemporary trends and patterns in policing around the world;
6. Critically engage with contemporary debates on police reform and more radical perspectives on policing;
7. Explore the ambits and limits of policing and its impacts on social and political processes around the world.

Transferable skills

- Understand and adopt reflexive and critical reading practices;
- Be able to critically evaluate policies, processes, and the politics behind policing and law enforcement;
- Be able to understand the similarities and differences in how societies around the world are policed;
- Explore the social, political, historical and global processes that impact how laws are enforced and how public order and public safety is maintained;
- Understand the relevance of public and private policing to state power and the criminal justice system;
- Think critically about how policing affects different groups, such as marginalised communities;
- Engage in group debates and discussions on current affairs and cases pertaining to police work and practice;
- Develop team working skills and oral presentations;
- Demonstrate an ability to work independently, managing your own learning, and make use of scholarly reviews and primary and secondary sources;

- Be able to devise and sustain arguments, and/or solve problems, using a range of ideas and techniques drawn from sociology and criminology and other disciplines.
-

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	132 hours (88%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Readings for weekly seminars. Preparation for seminars. Preparation of weekly presentations. Preparation and writing of main assessments.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A

	Weighting	Study time
Assessed Essay	100%	80 hours

A 3,000-word essay from a list of given questions or a question devised by the student and approved by the module leader.

Feedback on assessment

Students will be given written feedback on in-class group and individual presentations on how to incorporate their knowledge from it into their essays. The last seminar of the module will be skills-based and students will be asked to bring to class a one-page outline of their final essay/assessment so that they can get informal feedback on it before the submission of the final essay/assessment. Students will also be given feedback on their ideas/arguments/outlines during

office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core for:

- Year 2 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 3 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Optional for:

- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
 - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 2 of L301 Sociology

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 5 of ULAA-ML35 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree) (with Intercalated year)
- Year 4 of ULAA-ML33 Undergraduate Law and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)