

SO371-15 Drugs, Crime and Society

24/25

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Silvia Gomes

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 drugs, crime, and society. Students will be introduced to the historical and political developments that have influenced drug control strategies and practices around the world. This will serve as a foundation to understand many of the contemporary issues and debates concerning drug use, abuse, and addiction, as well as the suggested links between drugs and crime, and drugs in the criminal justice system.

Recent events, such as the legalisation of certain drugs in some countries, the gendered victimisation associated with drugs (e.g., spiking) or the use of illicit drugs for medicinal purposes, highlight the importance of problematising certain trends, patterns and strategies in responding to drug use and drug problems. Students will therefore be taught to reflect on the relationship between drugs and public policies, and have a critical appreciation of the benefits and limitations of different societal responses to drug use and addiction. This debate will be based on international perspectives, for instance when critically reflecting on the global nature of the criminalisation of the drug market and when comparing drug control practices across countries.

Module aims

This module seeks to provide students with an introduction to fundamental aspects of drugs, crime and society. The module is divided into two distinct, though overlapping sections. Part one is

designed to provide a detailed understanding of the wider social context of drug use through the provision of a historical perspective to illustrate the way that drugs (including alcohol) have been subject to moral censure and regulation as attempts to control certain social groups. The effects of drug use, abuse and addiction are also covered, discussing the pharmacology of drugs as well as the drug's classification so this knowledge can be set against the social factors that have a significant bearing on understanding problematic or non-problematic drug use. It also outlines and reflects on the politics of drug control through legislation, prevention policies and treatment programs, resulting from a mixture of moral and health concerns, scientific discovery, professional organisation and international agencies. The second part of the module turns attention to the specific link of drugs to crime, presenting theories that try to explain this connection and the significant types of drug use and abuse related to particular crimes. Furthermore, it debates the international nature of the drug market and how it impacts the control of drugs in different stages of the criminal justice system.

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 1 . Drugs, Society, and Social Control

1. Drug Use and Abuse: Definitions and History
2. Drug Classifications: From legal to CNS classifications
3. Conceptualisation of Drug Use, Abuse, and Addiction
4. Drug-related Harm: Are Certain Social Groups More Vulnerable?
5. Societal Responses to Drugs: International Perspectives
6. Reading Week

Part 2. Drugs, Crime and the Criminal Justice

7. Theoretically Understanding Drug Use and Crime
8. Drugs and Crime: Is there a link?
9. Drugs and the Criminal Justice System – From Policing Drugs to Prison
10. Module Review and Assignment Discussion

Learning outcomes

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

- Critically reflect on the historical and social construction of drugs and drug abuse;
- Demonstrate a working understanding of the different kinds of drugs and their (problematic or non problematic) uses;
- Understand the social correlates of drug use and abuse, across gender, race, age and social class;
- Debate and constructively challenge a variety of myths surrounding drug use and addiction;
- Have a critical appreciation of the benefits and limitations of different responses to drug use and addiction;
- Explain the function of programs for the prevention and treatment of drug use and abuse;
- Discuss the evolution, function, and consequences of drug control policies in the UK and

- other parts of the world (e.g., U.S., Canada and Portugal);
- Identify, examine and critically reflect about theoretical approaches on the link between drugs and crime;
 - Critically debate patterns of drug use and abuse related to crime;
 - Critically debate the international nature of the illicit drug market and impacts it has on drug control policies;
 - Discuss the ways in which drug control policies impact drugs users and the criminal justice system.

Indicative reading list

- Bean, P. (2008). *Drugs and Crime*. Third edition. Willan Publishing.
- Bean, P. (2010). *Legalising Drugs: Debates and Dilemmas*, Cambridge: Policy Press
- Belenko, S., Spohn, C. (2015). *Drugs, Crime and Justice*. Sage Publications.
- Bennett, T. and Holloway, K. (2005). *Understanding drugs, alcohol and crime*. Open University Press.
- Davenport-Hines, R. (2001). *The Pursuit of Oblivion: A global history of narcotics 1500-2000*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Escobedo, A. (1996). *A Brief History of Drugs – From the Stone Age to the Stoned Age*. Rochester: Park Street Press.
- Faupel, C., Horowitz, A., Weaver, G. (2013). *The Sociology of American Drug Use (3rd Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harding, S. (2020). *County Lines: Exploitation and Drug Dealing among Urban Street Gangs*. Bristol: Bristol University Press.
- Inciardi, J., McElrath, K. (2015) (eds.). *The American Drug Scene – Readings in a Global Context*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lyman, M.D. (2017). *Drugs in Society - Causes, Concepts, and Control*. Routledge.
- Nutt, D. (2012). *Drugs: Without the Hot Air*, Cambridge: UIT Cambridge.
- Ritter, A. (2022). *Drug Policy*. Routledge.
- Shiner, M. (2009). *Drug Use and Social Change: The Distortion of History*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Stevens, A. (2011). *Drugs, Crime and Public Health: The Political Economy of Drug Policy*. Routledge.
- Tonry, M., Wilson, J. (1990) (eds.). *Drugs and Crime*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilson, A. (2007) *Northern Soul: music, drugs and subcultural identity*, Cullompton: Willan.
- Young, J. (1971). *The Drugtakers*. Harper Collins.

Research element

Students taking this module will need to engage actively with empirical and theoretical research on drugs and crime for coursework and weekly debates.

Interdisciplinary

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

International

This module will focus not just on drugs and crime in the UK but also on other geographies. More specifically, the discussion of the history of drugs is set in the global context, the debate around the legal responses to drugs compares different countries, and the discussion around the economy of drugs and the drug control strategies consider drugs international routes.

Subject specific skills

1. Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts, theories, and approaches in drugs and crime scholarship;
2. Demonstrate an appreciation of the diversity and range of social and legal responses to drug use, abuse and addiction
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and political contexts framing the current drug control strategies
4. Appreciate how class, race, and gender affect drug use and drug control strategies;
5. Critically evaluate and assess contemporary trends and patterns of drug control policies around the world
6. Critically engage with contemporary debates on the benefits and limitations of different responses to drug use and addiction

Transferable skills

- Understand and adopt reflexive and critical reading practices;
- Be able to critically evaluate policies, processes, and the politics behind drug control strategies;
- Be able to understand the similarities and differences in how societies around the world respond to drug use, abuse, and addiction;
- Explore the social, political, historical and global processes that impact how drug policies and legislations are enforced;
- Understand how drugs are dealt in and by the criminal justice system;
- Think critically about how drug use, abuse and addiction affects different social groups;
- Engage in group debates and discussions on current affairs and cases pertaining to drugs and crime;
- Develop team working skills and oral debates;
- 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	112 hours (75%)
Assessment	20 hours (13%)
Total	150 hours

Private study description

Readings for weekly seminars.
Preparation for seminars.
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%	20 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 in an 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

Pre-requisites

No.

Courses

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 3 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
 - Year 3 of L301 Sociology
- Year 4 of USOA-L306 BA in Sociology (with Intercalated Year)
- Year 3 of USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology
- Year 4 of USOA-L315 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list A for:

- ULAA-ML34 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
 - Year 3 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
 - Year 4 of ML34 Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
- 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 D for:

- Year 3 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 4 of UHIA-VL14 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with Year Abroad)