

# SO279-15 Media, Crime and Justice

**26/27**

**Department**

Sociology

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Silvia Gomes

**Credit value**

15

**Module duration**

10 weeks

**Assessment**

100% coursework

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This interdisciplinary module seeks to critically explore the relationship between media, crime and justice. Students will be introduced to the theoretical analysis from criminology, sociology, media studies and cultural studies to provide a critical understanding of the relationship between media, crime and justice, as well as how crime news is ideologically manufactured and socially constructed, leading to feelings of fear and insecurity towards certain crimes and certain social groups. Students will be taught to have a critical appreciation of the media's role in shaping societal perspectives around crime and justice – from policing to prisons – and the implications these depictions have in significantly influencing wider public perceptions and public policy. Recent media and new media cases from all different parts of the world will be analysed to discuss the media representations of crime, the 'criminal' and the criminal justice system.

### Module aims

This module will introduce students to fundamental aspects of crime, media and justice. The module is divided into three distinct, though overlapping sections.

Part one focuses on the theoretical analysis from criminology, sociology, media studies and cultural studies to provide a critical understanding of the relationship between media and crime. It also examines the extent to which crime and justice are constructed according to prevailing cultural assumptions and ideologies and how crime news leads to feelings of fear and insecurity

towards certain crimes and certain social groups.

The second part of the module explores the important links between media (and new media) and the different stages of the criminal justice system, namely policing, courts and prisons, and the implications this has for our understanding of the justice system, its actors and wider public perceptions of justice and punishment.

Finally, the last part delves into the role technology, and especially new media, plays in our critical understanding and questioning of media representations of crime and justice in our contemporary society.

## 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.

1. Theorizing Media and Crime
2. Moral Panics and Media Panics
3. Everyday Construction of Crime News
4. Media Coverage of Crime: Focus on the Black, the Young and the 'Crazy'
5. Media Coverage of Police and Policing
6. Reading Week
7. Media and Courts: High-Profile Cases
8. Media, Prisons and Punishment
9. New Media, Technology, Crime and Justice
10. Module Review and Assignment Discussion

## Learning outcomes

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

- Understand theories shaping the academic fields of criminology and media studies.
- Recognise "media effects" debate: its origins, and its influence on contemporary debates about media, crime, and justice.
- Analyse how crime news is "manufactured" along ideological lines.
- Explore and understand concepts of moral panics and media panics and how they may be applied.
- Understand which groups of society are most featured in media accounts of crime and criminal justice (along social class, age, race and gender lines) feeding into public fear and anxiety.
- Discuss the changing mediated (or mediatized) relationship between police and the public.
- Explore high-profile court cases, how these are framed by the media and the implications in terms of the public's sense of justice.
- Examine the enduring appeal of crime movies and discuss prison in cinema, its role as allegory, and its relationship to penal reform.
- Reflect on the new media's role in discussions about crime and justice.
- Address the aims and objectives of the module demonstrating close engagement with module materials.

## **Indicative reading list**

[Reading lists can be found in Talis](#)

## **Research element**

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

## **Interdisciplinary**

This module draws from sociology, criminology, media studies, cultural studies, and politics.

## **International**

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

## **Subject specific skills**

1. Demonstrate an understanding of key concepts, theories, and approaches in media and crime scholarship;
2. Demonstrate a critical appreciation of the media's role in shaping societal perspectives around crime and justice from policing to prisons
3. Demonstrate an understanding of the political and social contexts framing the construction of crime news
4. Appreciate how crime news feeds into public fear and anxiety regarding certain crimes and certain social groups
5. Critically evaluate and assess contemporary (new) media cases around the world
6. Critically engage with contemporary debates on the implications of new media in shaping crime and criminal justice

## **Transferable skills**

- Understand and adopt reflexive and critical reading practices;
- Be able to understand the impact of crime news on public opinions of crime and justice
- Explore the social, cultural, political and historical processes that impact crime news creation and public policies;
- Engage in group debates and discussions on current affairs and media cases on crime and justice;
- Develop team working skills and oral debates;
- Demonstrate an ability to work independently, manage 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.
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## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Seminars	9 sessions of 1 hour (6%)
Private study	52 hours (35%)
Assessment	80 hours (53%)
Total	150 hours

### Private study description

Reading and note-taking for seminars, answering set questions for seminars, research and further reading for assessment.

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group A

Assessment component	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
3000 words critical review (100%) A 3,000-word critical review of a (new) media case study.	100%	80 hours	Yes (extension)

Reassessment component is the same

## Feedback on assessment

Students will be given written feedback on in-class group and individual presentations on how to incorporate their knowledge into their case studies. 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 assessment so that they can get informal feedback on it before the submission of the final assessment. Students will also be given feedback on their ideas/arguments/outlines during office hours.

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of ULAA-ML34 BA in Law and Sociology (Qualifying Degree)
- USOA-L301 BA in Sociology
  - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 2 of L301 Sociology
  - Year 2 of L305 Sociology with Specialism in Cultural Studies
  - Year 2 of L303 Sociology with Specialism in Gender Studies
  - Year 2 of L30C Sociology with Specialism in Race and Global Politics
  - Year 2 of L304 Sociology with Specialism in Research Methods
  - Year 2 of L30E Sociology with Specialism in Social Inequalities and Public Policy
  - Year 2 of L302 Sociology with Specialism in Social Policy
  - Year 2 of L30G Sociology with Specialism in Social and Political Thought
  - Year 2 of L30A Sociology with Specialism in Technologies and Markets
- Year 2 of UPOA-ML13 Undergraduate Politics and Sociology
- USOA-L314 Undergraduate Sociology and Criminology
  - Year 2 of L314 Sociology and Criminology
  - Year 2 of L314 Sociology and Criminology
- Year 2 of UIPA-L3L8 Undergraduate Sociology and Global Sustainable Development