

SO2G8-15 Policing and Society

26/27

Department

Sociology

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Zoha Waseem

Credit value

15

Module duration

10 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

This is an interdisciplinary course that critically approaches, explores, and discusses the relationship between policing and society. We will consider police-society relations and the organisational, cultural, political and social factors that influence and shape and inform these relations. Students will be introduced to the historical and political developments that have influenced policing philosophies, strategies and practices around the world.

Contemporary issues and global debates around police use of force, corruption, digitalisation, accountability, and legitimacy will also be explored. Recent events and debates, such as the policing of protest and dissent in different parts of the world, coupled with debates on racism, discrimination, policing of immigration and mobility, media and surveillance, highlight the importance of problematising certain trends and patterns in policing and police work today.

Students will, therefore, be taught to evaluate reform agendas, relations between police and other institutions (public and private), news reports and media coverage, and engage with critical perspectives that call for police defunding and abolition. While much of the scholarship on policing (and that from police studies) focuses on western democratic contexts (e.g., UK, US, Europe), we will equally explore policing and police-related issues in non-democratic contexts in the developing world and the 'global South'.

Module aims

This module seeks to provide students with a deep understanding of policing and police work, including the purpose of policing and the limits of policing. It aims to inform students of criminology, sociology, and related disciplines, how policing is connected to social control, justice, and the maintenance of order.

In this research-led module, we will critically explore and analyse the foundations of policing and policework, the organizations and institutions behind policing, and practices in different international systems, contexts, and jurisdictions.

Issues and challenges in contemporary policing, such as the use of excessive force, militarisation, racism and discrimination, and public trust in the police, will be situated within their broader social, historical and political contexts, in the UK but also other jurisdictions around the world.

We will look at the key concepts, theories, and arguments, that have been coming out of policing scholarship and literature. Conceptually, we will draw from across social sciences, including scholarship from sociology, criminology, political science, socio-legal studies, and anthropology.

Students will evaluate the existing ideas guiding policing strategies and police reform, such as procedural justice and police legitimacy, community policing, evidence-based policing, and more. Students will also delve into critical perspectives and debates that call for defunding, abolition, and decolonisation.

In addition to key readings and scholarship, students will also be introduced to relevant cases (police incidents and events), and encouraged to familiarise themselves with relevant documentaries, TV series, movies, 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 other jurisdictions and incorporate research from the global South, including but not limited to perspectives on policing from Latin America, Asia, and Africa, in addition to case studies and examples from the UK and US, to enable us to think about policing and police-society relations in a global context.

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. Definitions, Origins, and Evolution
2. Colonial and Postcolonial Policing
3. Institutional Cultures, Trust, and Procedural Justice
4. Counterinsurgency, Counterterrorism, and Policing Wars
5. Protest, Resistance, Dissent
6. Police, Media, and Popular Culture
7. Police Digitalization and Artificial Intelligence
8. Beyond the Police: Place, Players, Partners

9. Reform? Review Lecture and Assessment Prep

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

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

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 ambitions 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.
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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

Students should dedicate a few hours each week to independently prepare for weekly lectures and seminars and review the required readings for in-class participation.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
Assessed Essay	100%	80 hours	Yes (extension)
A 3,000-word essay from a list of given questions.			

Reassessment component is the same

Feedback on assessment

Students will be given 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 able 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:

- Year 2 of USOA-L301 BA in 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)