

CCJS 225
Responses to Violence
University of Maryland
Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Fall 2022

Class Time: MW 2-3:15pm

Class Location: SQH 1119

Professor: Min Xie, PhD

Office: LeFrak 2220K

Phone: 301-405-7063 (email me if I am not in my office)

Office Hours: MW 12:30-1:30pm, or by appointment

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Course Description

Studying historical trends in violent crime helps us understand the patterns of crime today. This course starts by examining the long decline in violence since humans have lived on earth (about 200,000 years) for insight into what might have contributed to the pacification process described by social scientists. In order to learn how to stop people from physically hurting one another, we need to understand why they resort to violence in the first place. This type of understanding requires that we study human nature. The goal of this course is to find ways to leverage human nature to decrease the risk of violence.

We will integrate criminological theories with empirical data to predict outcomes of different intervention strategies for violent situations. For example, the most common intervention strategy derived from rational choice theory is deterrence, or the threat of punishment, which has been shown to only have a limited effect. We will study the unintentional consequences of deterrence and consider alternatives. Further, we will also learn about the factors that can sometimes dismantle rationality leading to outcomes that counter the expectations of rational choice.

Along these lines, each student will identify a type of violence that plagues us today and develop an intervention strategy based on the principles learned in this course. Students will be expected to outline the assumptions needed to assure a reduction in violence and to identify potential risks to those assumptions that could lead to unintentional consequences (or externalities). In essence, the goal of this class is to teach you to use your **informed** imagination to develop creative solutions that might be ready for use in the near future.

Required Textbook

Pinker, Steven. 2011. *The Better Angels of our Nature: Why Violence has Declined*. New York: Penguin. ISBN: 978-0-670-02295-3

You may use either the print or electronic version of the textbook. Other required readings will be provided on ELMS (<http://elms.umd.edu>)

ELMS

The course uses the web-based tool, ELMS, to provide you with easy and anytime access to information and notices about the class. In order to access ELMS you must first be registered for the class. Once registered, use your Directory ID and password to log onto the website. This website will contain a wealth of information about the class such as a copy of the syllabus, details on each assignment, and other reading materials. It also contains important course announcements. You can access your grades (but not those of others) through ELMS once they are posted. **I would strongly encourage you to access ELMS on a regular basis.** The site address is: <http://elms.umd.edu>. The site has a link for “ELMS support.”

Course Grading

The goal of the class is for you to learn how to think critically about the problem of violence. Grades will be based on how engaged you are in class (participation and presentation), how deeply you think about the problem of violence (progress papers and final papers), and how much you have learned (exam).

Grading Breakdown:

Course Participation	10%	Group Presentation	10%
First Progress Paper	15%	Final Paper (two options)	20%
Second Progress Paper	15%	Exam	30%

Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A+ = 96.5% - 100%	C+ = 76.5% - 79.49%
A = 92.5% - 96.49%	C = 72.5% - 76.49%
A- = 89.5% - 92.49%	C- = 69.5% - 72.49%
B+ = 86.5% - 89.49%	D+ = 66.5% - 69.49%
B = 82.5% - 86.49%	D = 62.5% - 66.49%
B- = 79.5% - 82.49%	D- = 59.5% - 62.49%
	F = Any grade < 59.5%

Participation

The assessment of your participation is based on several factors including how engaged you are during class discussion, the quantity and quality of your participation on discussion, and the feedback you give and engagement during the group presentations at the end of the semester. As an I-Series class it is important that the students remain engaged so that all of our learning is enhanced. If you complete the assignments and come to class ready to learn and discuss, you should learn a lot.

Course Paper

For the class, you will write a paper that addresses a type of violence that plagues us today by learning as much as you can about it and developing an intervention strategy based on the principles of this course. In order to assure that you put much thought into each component of this project, it will be broken into two progress reports that you will turn in on specific due dates, for which I will grade and give feedback. For the final paper, you can either (1) combine all two reports into a coherent final paper using the required format, or (2) decide not to submit a final

paper but use the average of the two progress reports to be the score of your final paper (option good for students with satisfactory scores).

First Progress Report

For this report you are to identify a type of violence or an ongoing violent conflict that is troublesome today from a list of assigned topics. Examples of topics are gun violence, domestic violence, gang violence, racial/ethnic violence, hate-motivated violence, school violence, workplace violence, genocide, terrorism, or something else. For this first report, you are to convince the reader that this is an ongoing problem, by describing it in depth and highlighting the motives that maintain its momentum. Be sure to cite academic research articles (NOT online news reports) to support your arguments. A detailed description of this assignment, along with a grading rubric and a sample paper format, will be given in class.

Second Progress Report

For this portion of the report, you are to develop an intervention strategy that you think will reduce incidence of your selected violence based on the principles learned from the class. Be sure to explain (1) what the current solutions are out there and how they fall short based on your review of the literature in your second progress report, (2) how your intervention strategy is different or better than the current solutions, (3) what principles you use to develop your strategy, (4) name any assumptions that you are making that would need to be met in order for your intervention to be effective, and (5) discuss any factors that will support or threaten the implementation of your ideas. Keep in mind that this project is requiring you to use your imagination and to think outside of the box. The course intentionally draws your attention to changes in violence over several millenniums so that your vision will go well beyond what might be possible today. You are encouraged to use your imagination because all change starts with an idea, and sometimes those ideas are well ahead of their time. A more detailed guide on how to complete this assignment will be given in class.

Final Paper

For those turning in a final paper, your final paper will be a combination of all two progress reports that incorporates the feedback. You are to incorporate the ideas from the two progress reports in a way that helps the flow of your paper taking the reader on a journey from part 1 (the introduction to the problem) to part 2 (the solution). A more detailed guide on how to complete this assignment will be given in class.

Group Presentations

For the class, you will be assigned to one of four groups that will develop a group presentation designed to teach the remainder of the class about a topic of violence today. The group will have an entire class period (1.25 hours) to present material and engage the audience in whatever manner they choose. The purpose of these presentations is to give the group members the opportunity to work together to teach the audience about a current problem in violence and present possible ways to reduce or end that violence.

Students' participation in the group assignments will affect their participation grade. Each member of the group will review the performance of other group members. Further, if any group member is discovered as free riding on the work of others, their grade will be lowered. A more detailed guide on the assignment and grading criteria will be given in class.

Each group will be told which day they will present at the time of the assignment. If you are unable to attend class that day due to an excusable event, you have until two weeks after assignment to request a switch.

You must be present for other students' presentations regardless of whether you have done your own presentation. You will lose a significant number of participation points for not attending presentation sessions unless you have an acceptable excuse (see course attendance and makeup policy). To show respect for your classmates, you will lose points for coming to class late or leaving early without proper notification and acceptable excuses.

Exam

The exam (multiple choice and short answer questions) will be an overview of the course materials, including the readings, the lectures, and the in-class discussions. We will have a review session prior to the exam.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Academic dishonesty of any form will absolutely NOT be tolerated. The University of Maryland has a nationally Recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students. As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. The Student Honor Council proposed and the University Senate approved an Honor Pledge. The University Honor Pledge reads:

“I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.”

Students will be asked to write the University approved Honor Pledge on each paper and on the final exam. Students also are personally responsible for reviewing the course's policy statement on academic integrity on ELMS ([Syllabus Supplement - Ethics of Scholarship](#)).

DISABILITY SUPPORT

I will make every effort to accommodate students who are registered with the Accessibility and Disability Service (ADS) and who provide me with a University of Maryland ADS Accommodation form. This form must be presented to me **no later than September 12, 2022**. I am unable to accommodate students who are not registered with ADS or who do not provide me with documentation that has not been reviewed by ADS by that date. ADS students who are requesting to take their exams at the ADS Center need to provide me with a testing form for each exam that must be turned in to me no later than 2 weeks prior to each exam. The student is expected to take the exam at the same time as the rest of the class.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCES

If you are restricted from meeting your course requirements due to a religious observance, you will need to discuss this with me by **September 12, 2022**. Please submit a request for an alternative time to complete an assignment by that date.

ATHLETIC EVENTS

Official athletic schedules must be submitted to me by **September 12, 2022**. Practices do not count as an excused absence; but competitive events do. Athletes who failed to submit their

expected missed classes and who miss class assignments or major scheduled graded events listed in **bold** under the Course Schedule below will receive a grade of zero for the missed events.

CLASSROOM CODE OF CONDUCT

The success of the class is dependent not only on my abilities and talents as an instructor to communicate new and complicated ideas, but also on our ability as a class to work together to create an environment conducive to learning. As a Department and University, we expect the faculty and students to be prepared for class and to be actively engaged in the classroom activities. Unfortunately, disruptive behaviors in the classroom cheat other students out of their opportunity to learn. The University of Maryland's Code of Academic Integrity defines classroom disruption as "behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of a class." Examples include coming late to class, repeatedly leaving and entering the classroom without authorization, making loud or distracting noises, and persisting in speaking without being recognized. As the instructor, I also find the following distracting: reading outside material, sleeping, loud side conversations with other students, text messaging and using laptops for non-academic functions (IM, e-mail, Facebook, surfing, etc.). I also request that you silent your cell phones and other electronic devices during class.

Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with one another, the teaching assistants (when available), or me will be subject to referral to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

MISSED EXAM, PROGRESS REPORTS, PRESENTATION OR FINAL PAPER

Makeup assessments will NOT be offered for unexcused or undocumented absences. Excused absences include religious observances, mandatory military obligation, illness of the student or illness of an immediate family member, required participation in university activities, death in the family, and required court appearances. Changes in employment schedules, personal travel, technical/internet problems, etc. do not qualify as excused absences.

Additionally, **all written work should be turned in to the instructor by the beginning of class on the due date.** Prior notification is required in all instances for excused absences for major scheduled graded events listed in **bold** under the Course Schedule below. Additionally, documentation including an obituary/death notice, an official health center excused absence form, or hospital records must be provided. **Make-up work must be completed within one week of its original due date.** All necessary arrangements must be made with the instructor via email. Preserving this agreement in writing ensures there is no discrepancy at some later point. I reserve the right to alter the content of the assignment, including making the make-up exam a short-answer or essay format.

Addendum on Medical Absences: The in-class presentations and final exam are considered to be major scheduled graded events (noted in bold under the course calendar section below) and therefore the new university medical excuse policy which allows one student signed honor statement attesting to illness does **NOT** apply to them (<https://www.president.umd.edu/administration/policies/section-v-student-affairs/v-100g>). In the event you become chronically absent, missing more than two consecutive weeks of class, due to the same persistent illness, this must be verified by a health professional in writing. Any absences from major scheduled graded events will be counted as zeroes if you have failed to inform the instructor of these developments. Please refer to the link above in

locating the items that must be included in both the signed honor statement and chronic absence verification.

GRADE DISPUTES

If you have questions or concerns about your grade(s) and believe that I should review them, you must submit a written request via email that describes your concern in detail. This request must be submitted within one week of the day that grades for the relevant assignment are disseminated.

COURSE EVALUATION

Your feedback about this course is very important to me. Completing a course evaluation is part of what it means to be a member of the UMD academic community. At the end of the semester I very much would like you to fill out the online course evaluation. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your course evaluation. You can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluation starting in late November.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

On occasion, classes may be cancelled due to inclement weather. If the university is closed on the day a graded item is scheduled the graded assignment will be rescheduled for the next class meeting that the university is open. If the exam is cancelled, we will follow university rules for rescheduling.

COPYRIGHT NOTICE

Class meetings and course materials, including instructions, presentations, assessments, content outlines, and similar materials are the intellectual property of the course instructor and protected by legal copyright. You may take notes and make copies of course materials for your own personal use. You may not, nor may you allow others to, distribute lecture notes and course materials publicly, whether or not a fee is charged, without the express written consent of the instructor. Similarly, you own copyright in any work products that you create for this course. If I am interested in sharing your work with others, I will ask for your written permission. Copyright violations may result in referrals to the Office of Student Conduct and/or civil penalties under State and Federal law (www.copyright.gov/title17).

For more information on the University of Maryland Policies for Undergraduate Students, visit <http://www.ugst.umd.edu/courserelatedpolicies.html>

COURSE SCHEDULE

DAY	DATE	TOPIC	READING ASSIGNMENT
Mon.	8/29	Syllabus review, preface	
Wed.	8/31	Violence Then, Violence Today	Pinker 1-12, 18-21
Wed.	9/7	The Historic Decline in Violence & Overview of Conclusions.	Pinker 23-30, 61-64
Mon.	9/12	The Pacification and Civilizing Processes	Pinker 31-36, 47-61, 64-81
Wed.	9/14	The Civilizing Process in These United States	Pinker 91-106
Mon.	9/19	Recivilization: Explaining the Decline in Homicide USA beginning in 1991 & How to Write a Paper	Pinker 116-119, 121-128
Wed.	9/21	The Humanitarian Revolution	Pinker 146-153, 168-180
Mon.	9/26	The Rights Revolution FIRST PROGRESS REPORT DUE	Pinker 378-394, 406-415, 447-454, 475-481
Wed.	9/28	Rational Choice Theory & Deterrence	Pinker 532-541 ELMS readings
Mon.	10/3	Violence Today: General & Violence Against Women	TBA
Wed.	10/5	Violence Today: School Shootings & Other Types of Violence	TBA
Mon.	10/10	Inner Demons: Predation, Dominance & Revenge	Pinker 509-531
Wed.	10/12	Inner Demons: Sadism, Ideology, & Pure Evil	Pinker 547-570
Mon.	10/17	Better Angels: Empathy & Self-Control	Pinker 571-611
Wed.	10/19	Better Angels: Biology, Morality, & Taboo	Pinker 611-642
Mon.	10/24	Better Angels: Reason	Pinker 642-670
Wed.	10/26	Developments Contributing to the Reduction of	Pinker Chapter 10

		Violence	
Mon.	10/31	Policing/Corrections Possibilities	TBA
Wed.	11/2	Restorative/Procedural Justice	TBA
Mon.	11/7	Innovation Lecture, Allow Your imagination (Group work)	TBA
Wed.	11/9	A summary of the course materials covered so far: Exam Review	Do your homework: Review your notes, outline them, and see if you have questions
Mon.	11/14	Exam (on materials covered so far)	
Wed.	11/16	No class (ASC conference)	
Mon.	11/21	Allow Your Imagination (Group Work) SECOND PROGRESS REPORT DUE	TBA
Mon.	11/28	Allow Your Imagination (Group Work)	TBA
Wed.	11/30	Presentation I	
Mon.	12/5	Presentation II	
Wed.	12/7	Presentation III	
Mon.	12/12	Presentation IV	
Sat.	12/17	Optional FINAL PAPER DUE (submit to ELMS)	

This is an approximate schedule and will likely change. However, the bolded events will always be on the date that is marked above.