

Policing and Citizenship in the Americas

Instructor: Camila A. Gripp (Yale University)

Course will be in Portuguese.

The course will have five sessions. Dates will be arranged on the first day.

Description:

Governments throughout the Americas (and beyond) have long struggled to organize police institutions such that they address societal demands for security, and that the deployment of coercion against citizens is applied proportionally, equitably and constrained by law and external accountability. From São Paulo and Bogotá to Mexico City and New York, police forces engage in excessive use of force that largely targets marginalized sectors of society, including Afro descendants and those living in impoverished urban peripheries. At the same time, these groups are also underserved by their police (and the state) which leaves them vulnerable to high rates of crime and violence.

This course will explore the present controversies around policing. In the wake of police killings and police violence against protesters, there is an unprecedented level of debate about how, and even whether, policing should exist going forward. It is clear that in too many jurisdictions in the United States and in the Americas, traditional approaches to public safety have failed to serve and protect people equitably. Much less clear is the nature of alternatives to traditional policing, and how they can be implemented successfully. There is, therefore, an urgent need for discussions that can advance efforts to reimagine and realize a new vision of what public safety can look like.

Through discussions about contemporary problems of policing throughout the Americas, we will start by probing the ways in which police institutions shape the lived experiences of individuals and communities, and how police may help reproduce existing social inequalities. We will then turn to three current, pressing debates about policing and society.

Course structure:

Students of this class will meet weekly for a seminar style session. Students will be expected to engage in discussions following the instructor's presentation.

Bibliography:

A detailed bibliography will be provided to those enrolled in the class. Most of the readings are only available in English, although some are in Portuguese and Spanish. Readings will include articles and book chapters from a range of authors of diverse backgrounds (in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, country of origin and field of study). We will read, for example, texts by radical activists doing work on the ground, case studies written by policy researchers and texts by academics who approach the same problems from different perspectives. Students will be expected to engage with different materials and perspectives in a meaningful manner, seeking areas of productive consensus where progress towards an alternative reality of police-community relations can be achieved.

Readings include (among other authors from the US and Latin America):

Frederico de Almeida, Adriana Beltrán, Amy Chazkel, José Miguel Cruz, Patrisse Cullors, Lucía Dammert, The Fergusson Commission, Hugo Fruhling, Yanilda González, Renato Sérgio de Lima, Fiona Macaulay, Tracey Mearns, Eduardo Moncada, Jacqueline Muniz, The Movement for Black

Lives, Michael Musheno, Robert Sampson, Patrick Sharkey, Jacqueline Sinhoretto, Tom Tyler and Mark Ungar.