

The University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy
Fall 2024

“Police Reform and Police Legitimacy”
PPHA 37106

Instructor: B. Robert Owens, Lecturer, browens@uchicago.edu

Office hours: By appointment

TA: [REDACTED]

Time: Tues/Thurs, 8:00am–9:20am

Location: Keller 2112

Course description

This course introduces students to the concept of legitimacy in policing, the related reform efforts implemented in police departments throughout the United States in recent years, and the recent challenges to reform from activist movements to defund or abolish the police.

Policing in the United States has been plagued by deep, systemic problems for many years, and there are few examples of successful and sustained police agency reform that can be held up as models. For decades before the mass protests that erupted in the summer of 2020 after the murder of George Floyd, local, state and federal efforts to reform the police have yielded frustratingly halting progress and ambiguous, partial evidence about what works. Ubiquitous video records of police-civilian interactions have changed the relationships among the police, the public, local political authorities, and the media. At the same time, policing itself is changing in profound ways. New technological capabilities have increased public expectations of transparency and efficiency in policing while raising concerns about privacy and due process rights. Local police have taken on an expanding portfolio of responsibilities, including presence in public schools, mental health crisis response, and counter-terrorism. The transition from the Obama Administration to the Trump Administration resulted in an abrupt shift in the relationship of the federal Department of Justice with local law enforcement agencies. The Biden Administration reversed course, re-initiating Department of Justice-led investigations and consent decrees.

This course will equip students to understand the issues at stake in the contemporary policy debates surrounding policing and the foundational scholarly knowledge underpinning those debates. Course topics include: the organizational structure of policing, its functional purpose, the normative expectations of citizens and communities that rely on the police for protection, and how police performance is measured. We will examine the trajectories of several cities, including Chicago, which have gone through local- or federal-led systematic police reform programs and evaluate the impact and promise of specific policy choices. The course will conclude with a consideration of the scope and limits of the concept of “police reform” and how the policy discourse around the goals of reform has changed over time.

Expectations, accommodations, assignments, and grading

The class will meet twice weekly. Tuesday sessions will be lectures, and the Thursday sessions will be discussions. Students are expected to come to Thursday discussion sessions fully prepared to discuss all the readings. The instructor will be available for office hours on Zoom or in person, by appointment. Individuals and small groups are equally welcome and encouraged to schedule time.

The course assignments will deal with difficult and contentious topics, including police violence and its aftermath. Students who wish to take the class should be prepared to engage academically with this challenging material and should come with a firm commitment to engage one another in respectful, open,

and rigorous discourse. Please contact the instructor early on with any concerns about this general policy or specific readings.

Do not hesitate to contact the instructor with questions about disability accommodations or for support in accessing other university-wide resources.

Grading will be based on contributions to class discussion, a midterm exam, and a final exam. The expectation for contributions to class discussion includes an expectation of contributing written discussion points to the course Canvas site prior to Thursday discussion classes. At least two posts by each student are expected over the quarter; more than two posts are welcome.

The relative weight of these components in the final grade will be: Class contributions: 20%; Midterm: 40%; Final exam: 40%. Exams will be graded anonymously.

Readings

All required readings will be made available on the course website. Those that are accessible through open-source platforms are also linked below.

Schedule

Week 1: Structure and function of policing in America

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. Simon Balto, *Occupied Territory: Policing Black Chicago from Red Summer to Black Power*. University of North Carolina Press (2020) (Chapter 5, pp. 154–189).
2. Malcolm Sparrow, *Handcuffed: What Holds Policing Back, and the Keys to Reform*. Brookings Institution Press (2016) (Chapter 1, pp. 1–39).
3. Patrick Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*. Norton (2018) (Chapters 2–3, pp. 14–60).

Week 2: Legitimacy, procedural justice, and legal estrangement

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. Tom Tyler, “Enhancing Police Legitimacy.” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 593:1, 84–99 (2004).
2. Monica Bell, “Police Reform and the Dismantling of Legal Estrangement.” *Yale Law Journal* 126, 2054–2150 (2017).
3. Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York University Press (2011) (pp. 52–63).

Optional:

Andrew Papachristos, Tracey Meares, Jeffrey Fagan, “Why Do Criminals Obey the Law? The Influence of Legitimacy and Social Networks on Active Gun Offenders.” *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 102:2 (2012).

Glen Walters and P. Colin Bolger, “Procedural justice perceptions, legitimacy beliefs, and compliance with the law: a meta-analysis.” *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 15 (2019).

James Forman, *Locking Up Our Own: Crime and Punishment in Black America*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux (2017) (Chapters 3–4, pp. 78–150).

Week 3: Accountability and oversight I: Local oversight models and civil litigation

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. U.S. Department of Justice, *Investigation of the Chicago Police Department* (2017), pp. 46–70, 74–79.
<https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/925846/download>
2. Sharon Fairley, “Survey Says?: U.S. Cities Double Down on Civilian Oversight of Police Despite Challenges and Controversies.” *Cardozo Law Review De Novo* (2020).
http://cardozolawreview.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/FAIRLEY.DN_2019.pdf
3. Joanna Schwartz, “Allocating the Costs of Police Misconduct Litigation: Available Evidence and a Research Agenda.” Working paper (2021).
<https://craftmediabucket.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/Microsoft-Word-Allocating-the-Costs-of-Police-Misconduct-Litigation-12.8.20.docx.pdf>

Optional:

- Joanna Schwartz, “Qualified Immunity’s Boldest Lie.” *University of Chicago Law Review* 88, 605–684 (2021).
https://lawreview.uchicago.edu/sites/lawreview.uchicago.edu/files/Schwartz_QualifiedImmunity_88UCLR605.pdf
- Joanna Schwartz, “The Case Against Qualified Immunity.” *Notre Dame Law Review* 93:5, 1797–1852 (2018).
<https://scholarship.law.nd.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4796&context=ndlr>

Week 4: Accountability and oversight II: Federal reform efforts

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. *Investigation of the Baltimore City Police Department*, U.S. Department of Justice (August 2016) (selections TBA). <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/883296/download>
2. *United States of America v. Police Department of Baltimore City et al.* consent decree (January 2017) (selections TBA). <https://www.justice.gov/opa/file/925056/download>
3. “Motion for Continuance of Public Fairness Hearing” in *United States of America v. Police Department of Baltimore City et al.* (April 2017). <https://htv-prod-media.s3.amazonaws.com/files/motion-doc-1491267565.pdf>
4. Jeff Sessions, “Memorandum for Heads of Civil Litigating Components and United States Attorneys” (2018). <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1109621/download>
5. Merrick Garland, “Memorandum for Heads of Civil Litigating Components and United States Attorneys” (2021). <https://int.nyt.com/data/documenttools/justice-dept/21d2019efd4541a7/full.pdf>
6. NPR, “Police Consent Decrees are Coming Back—But They Might Not Make Sense Anymore.” <https://www.npr.org/2021/06/22/1009182213/police-consent-decrees-are-coming-back-but-they-might-not-make-sense-anymore> (5 minutes 27 seconds to listen).

Optional:

- Baltimore Police Department Monitoring Team, “Seventh Semi-Annual Report” (February 2022). <https://www.bpdmonitor.com/resources-reports>

RESPONSE PAPER 1 DUE BY FRIDAY WEEK 4 (October 21, 2022)

Week 5: Interpreting police data and measuring performance

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. Malcolm Sparrow, *Handcuffed: What Holds Policing Back, and the Keys to Reform*. Brookings Institution Press (2016) (Chapter 2, pp. 40–92).
2. Franklin Zimring, *The City that Became Safe: New York's Lessons for Urban Crime and Its Control*. Oxford University Press (2012) (Chapters 1 and 5, pp. 1–27, 136–150).
3. City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Report on Race- and Ethnicity-Based Disparities in CPD’s Use of Force” (2022) (“Background” and “Objectives, Scope, and Methodology,” pp. 7–30). <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Use-of-Force-Disparities-Report.pdf>

Optional:

- Dean Knox and Jonathan Mummolo, “Toward a General Causal Framework for the Study of Racial Bias in Policing.” *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy* (2020).
- Dean Knox, Will Lowe, and Jonathan Mummolo, “Administrative Records Mask Racially Biased Policing.” *American Political Science Review* 114:3 (2020).

MIDTERM EXAM**Week 6: Police use of force: law, policy, statistics****Tues: Lecture****Thurs: Discussion****Readings:**

1. Chicago Police Department, “De-escalation, Response to Resistance, and Use of Force” (G03-02) (2021). <http://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6214>
2. Chicago Police Department, “Response to Resistance and Force Options” (G03-02-01) (2021). <http://directives.chicagopolice.org/#directive/public/6605>
3. Franklin Zimring, *When Police Kill*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2017) (Chapters 2–3, pp. 23–73).
4. City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Report on Race- and Ethnicity-Based Disparities in CPD’s Use of Force” (2022) (“Findings” and “Conclusion,” pp. 31–52). <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Use-of-Force-Disparities-Report.pdf>
5. *Vos v. City of Newport Beach, California* (9th Circuit Court of Appeals, 2018).

Optional:

- Roland Fryer, “An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force.” *Journal of Political Economy* 127:3 (2019).

Week 7: Police technology**Tues: Lecture****Thurs: Discussion****Readings:**

1. Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing*. Oxford University Press (2020) (Chapters 4 and 8, pp. 56–73, 136–148).
2. Dana Goodyear. “Can the Manufacturer of TASERS Provide the Answer to Police Abuse?” *New Yorker* (August 2018). <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/08/27/can-the-manufacturer-of-tasers-provide-the-answer-to-police-abuse>
3. City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “The Chicago Police Department’s Use of ShotSpotter Technology” (2021). <https://igchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Chicago-Police-Departments-Use-of-ShotSpotter-Technology.pdf>
4. Cynthia Lum et al., “Body-worn cameras’ effects on police officers and citizen behavior: A systematic review.” *Campbell Systematic Reviews* 16:3 (2020).

Week 8: Police culture, unions, and institutional history

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. John Crank and Robert Langworthy, "An Institutional Perspective of Policing." *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 83:2, 338–363 (1992).
2. Jill Lepore, "The Invention of the Police." *New Yorker* (July 2020).
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/20/the-invention-of-the-police>
3. Steven Rushin, "Police Union Contracts." *Duke Law Journal* 66:6 (2017).
4. William Finnegan, "How Police Unions Fight Reform." *New Yorker* (July 2020).
<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/08/03/how-police-unions-fight-reform>

Week 9: Police reform and transformation

Tues: Lecture

Thurs: Discussion

Readings:

1. Amna Akbar, "An Abolitionist Horizon for (Police) Reform." *California Law Review* 108, pp. 1781–1846.
2. Alex Vitale, *The End of Policing*. Verso (2018) (Chapters 3–6; pp. 55–128).
3. Monica Bell, "Anti-Segregation Policing." *New York University Law Review* 95, pp. 729–765.
4. Patrick Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence*. Norton (2018) (chapters 8–10; pp. 146–185).

FINAL EXAM