**Crime, Violence, and the Police**

EGOB 3541

Semester: 2022-10

Tuesdays, 9:30am-10:45am

Class location: W403

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**Course description**

This class is designed to expose students to the problem of crime and potential solutions. Because crime is costly – both in terms of the damage it imposes on those directly affected by it, and the allocation of scarce public resources used to combat it – those committed to designing and implementing public policies must understand what works and why in confronting challenges to order. This task is particularly urgent in Latin America: the region holds the dubious distinction of being the world’s most violent. Figuring out what policy solutions have worked elsewhere is crucial for Colombia in particular, as the country has struggled to confront organized crime and, despite real material gains in the security situation, continues to face severe problems of urban and rural violence. As we will see, much of the existing evidence on what works and why comes from contexts in the *developed* world; one of our tasks will be to theorize responsibly about how those findings might travel to our own region (or if not, why not).

This class is designed to understand how governments can effectively respond to specific criminal behaviors. To do so, we will engage with a host of different topics, including but not limited to different models of policing, the role of imprisonment and rehabilitation in preventing recidivism, body-worn and street cameras to detect and record criminal activity, alcohol-related violence, the legalization and decriminalization of drugs, and criminal investigation, among other issues.

Throughout the class we will focus on *causal identification*; that is, we will seek to ensure that the effects of different policy interventions studied can be attributed to those interventions, rather than to other confounding factors. Given this focus, we will spend some time at the beginning of the course reviewing the basics of causal identification and econometric models: we will assess the intuitions and mechanics behind quasi-experimental and experimental research designs, which are the most reliable ways to assess the causal impact of specific public policy interventions.

**Grading policy**

* Attendance and class participation (20%)
* Midterm (30%)
* Final paper (50%)

*Attendance and class participation*

Class participation means more than simply being present. Because I believe in the power of incentives, each class I will choose randomly one student to provide a 5 or so minute overview of *one* of the day’s papers. And, because I also believe in freedom of choice, I will leave to the randomly-selected student the decision about which paper s/he would like to present. These presentations *are for credit*: they will part of your attendance and class participation grade. Presentations should take the following form:

* What is the main question(s) that the article seeks to answer?
* What is the answer provided?
* What empirical approach/methodology was used? This should include the identification strategy, i.e. how does the author seek to overcome core problems in causal inference, including selection bias, omitted variable bias or reverse causality (endogeneity)?
* What sources of data were used? Be specific about the structure of the data, the context, the time period(s) covered, etc.
* What policy insights can be drawn from the article? That is, if we believe the findings, what should policymakers do about the problem?
* How costly might it be to solve the problem, or how costly is it if policymakers fail to address the problem?

Regardless of whether you are randomly called on or not, please come to class prepared to discuss *all* the papers listed on the syllabus for that day. *Note that this does not mean reading every single word of every paper assigned: you should read just enough of each paper to be able to answer the questions above.*

The police reform activity (described below) will also count towards your class participation grade.

Students who have been in my classes know how much I value punctuality. You must arrive on time.Therewill be a ten-minute grace period at the beginning of class, but after that ten-minute grace period you will not be allowed to enter the classroom. This is motivated by respect for those students who *do* arrive on time: I won’t waste their time by interrupting their learning experience as other students join the class late.

*Midterm*

The midterm will be a take-home exam you will complete in a 48-hour period. The exam will present you with a set of public policy problems related to crime, as well as short descriptions of policy solutions that have been implemented to address those problems. You will need to assess the evidence to determine whether you are convinced (or not) by the impact evaluations performed that allegedly show whether a given program has worked. If the evidence shows that the program did not work, you may be asked what additional evidence you think should be gathered to inform the discussion more fully. The midterm exam will be distributed on March 17 and will be due on March 21.

*Final project*

The final project will ask students to take one or a set of core findings from the literature on crime, crime prevention and criminal justice *that we have not yet examined in class* and apply them to the Colombian context. Students will use the framework developed by Mary Ann Bates and Rachel Glennerster in their article “[The Generalizability Puzzle](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/the_generalizability_puzzle)” for this purpose. *This is a group project with groups determined at random*.

Here is a suggested structure for the final project:

* Scope and costs of the problem identified
* What we know about how solutions to this problem have been implemented elsewhere
  + How strong is the existing evidence?
* Proposed solution for Colombia
  + Why do you think it would work in Colombia?
  + Where specifically would you implement the solution and why?
  + How might one or more aspects of the solution need to be adapted?
  + Institutional mapping of core actors (interests and leverage in blocking whatever reform is proposed)
* Plan for an impact evaluation of the program
  + What are the core threats to inference?

All groups will give a short presentation about their final projects at the end of the semester, at which time we’ll have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss.

**Learning objectives**

Students will acquire an understanding of the problem of crime, review solutions that have been implemented (primarily outside of Colombia) and apply what they have learned from other contexts to local problems in Colombia. A focus on the problems facing communities beset by crime will allow students to understand the complexity of anti-crime and justice interventions, including the social and economic costs associated with such policies, and to propose more effective and efficient solutions based on what has been shown convincingly to have worked. In the process, students will gain important methodological tools related to impact evaluation that should have positive “spillover” effects to other courses within and beyond the Escuela de Gobierno, as well as to their professional contexts. At the end of this course, students should be able to understand not only what works and why in crime prevention and the administration of justice, but also how best to evaluate future interventions in this area.

**What this class is and what it is not**

This course is not intended to provide a comprehensive look at crime. We will largely ignore the perceptions and experiences of victims of crime, the political causes and consequences of crime, the psychological or sociological roots of crime, among *many* other facets. Our principal interest is in examining what public policies “work” and what public policies do not “work” at reducing crime, where “success” is judged principally in terms of efficiency (does the policy accomplish its purpose?) and cost-effectiveness (does the policy accomplish its purpose in the best possible manner, with the least waste of time/effort/money, as compared to alternatives?). I acknowledge this is both a narrow definition of success and a partial look at crime, but time is short.

We also will almost completely ignore questions of policy implementation and will only discuss these issues as they relate to “faithful” implementation of specific crime prevention models, to understand whether failure to obtain desired results stems from failure to implement a given program as expected. Coordination among judicial and law enforcement authorities, for example, is both fascinating and crucial for policy success, but is beyond the scope of this class. So too is a discussion of how civil society might play a role in shaping citizen security outcomes. Throughout the semester I hope we will explicitly acknowledge how the perspective I have chosen to adopt for this class falls short, and how we might broaden its scope in the future.

**Laptop and cell phone policies**

Laptops should *only* be used to refer to course readings, and cell phones should only be used in case of emergency. That means, for example, no use of Whatsapp on your desktop! There is an emerging literature that shows that the use of electronic devices in the classroom can undermine learning. If I see that computers or cell phones are distracting those who use them or are distracting students in the immediate vicinity of students using them, I will forbid their use. Don’t make me do that, please!

**Language of instruction**

As I hope you already know, this course will be taught in English, in-class discussions will occur in English, and nearly all the readings are in English. However, to facilitate discussion, students may use *Spanglish* when necessary. I hope that this course allows you to improve your written and spoken English. As such, students should make use of language resources provided by the Departamento de Lenguas y Cultura.

**Reasonable accomodations and health measures**

Our lives have become increasingly complicated, and difficulties at home, at work, or elsewhere naturally affect our ability to reach our potential at Los Andes. If you are going through a difficult time, regardless of the reason, feel free to talk to me to ask for additional time for assignments, or for access to support. You don’t need to provide me with details about what you are going through, either. I have no problem offering an extra day to turn in work, for example, or the ability to skip a class entirely if you believe that doing so will help you recover and return to our class restored and ready to contribute.

*Please do not come to class if you feel at all sick*. The pandemic has taught us that health is a shared responsibility: we need to remain at home if we aren’t well, to avoid passing along the latest COVID variant to others. In line with Los Andes policy, everyone must always wear a mask in our classroom. That means that if you want to take a sip of water or eat something, you must leave the class to do so. We will ensure ample ventilation, as well. Our ability to remain on campus will depend upon taking these precations.

**Course schedule**

**January 25: Introduction to the course, generalizability and the costs of crime**

Mary Ann Bates and Rachel Glennerster. 2017. “The Generalizability Puzzle.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*.

**January 27: Causal identification**

Paul J. Gertler, Sebastian Martinez, Patrick Premand, Laura B. Rawlings, and Christel M. J. Vermeersch. 2011. La evaluación de impacto en la práctica. Pages 35-139 (capítulos 3-6).

*Recommended, for reference*:

http://scunning.com/cunningham\_mixtape.pdf

**February 1: Economic model of crime and its discontents**

John Donohue. 2007. “Economic Models of Crime and Punishment,” Social Research, Vol. 74: No. 2. Pages 379-412.

**February 3: Improving the social environment via schooling**

Kling, Jeffrey R., Jens Ludwig, and Lawrence F. Katz. 2005. “Neighborhood Effects on Crime for Female and Male Youth: Evidence from a Randomized Housing Voucher Experiment.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 120(1): 87-130.

Deming, David. 2011. “Better Schools, Less Crime?” *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126(4), 2063-2115.

*Recommended:*

Gómez Fernández, María Camila. 2019. “Educación y crimen: el impacto de la ampliación de la jornada escolar sobre la criminalidad en Bogotá alrededor de los colegios.”

**February 8: Improving the social environment via lights and clean streets**

Doleac, Jennifer L. and Nicholas J. Sanders. 2015. “Under the Cover of Darkness: How Ambient Light Influences Criminal Activity.” *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Chalfin, Aaron, Benjamin Hansen, Jason Lerner, and Lucie Parker. 2019. "Reducing Crime Through Environmental Design: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment of Street Lighting in New York City." Working paper.

**February 10: Improving the social environment via other kinds of infrastructure**

*My former students, Martín Jaramillo, Juan Pablo Perez Cepeda, and Ivan Felipe Jimenez Quitian will talk to us about their master’s thesis, which focuses on how opening low-cost (“hard discount”) D1 stores affects crime in Bogotá.*

**February 15: Policing I – Deployments, Focused Deterrence, Hotspots and Curfews**

Di Tella, Rafael and Ernesto Schargrodsky. 2004. “Do Police Reduce Crime? Estimates Using the Allocation of Police Forces After a Terrorist Attack.” *American Economic Review*, 94(1): 115-133.

Blattman, Christopher, Donald Green, Daniel Ortega, Santiago Tobón. 2021. “"Place-based interventions at scale: The direct and spillover effects of policing and city services on crime." *Journal of the European Economic Association*.

Carr, Jillian B. and Jennifer L. Doleac. 2017. “Keep the Kids Inside? Juvenile Curfews and Urban Gun Violence.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 100(4): 609-618.

*Recommended:*

“What Works to Prevent Violence Among Youth? A White Paper on Youth Violence, Crime Prevention, and the Mexican Context.” United States Agency for International Development.

Steven Mello. 2019. “More COPS, less crime.” *Journal of Public Economics*, 172: 174-200.

**February 17: Policing II – Community Policing**

*Our guest for today’s class will be Rob Blair, Associate Professor of Political Science and International and Public Affairs at Brown University.* ***Please read the following article and prepare 3 questions each on his community policing study.***

Blair, Graeme et al. 2021. “Community Policing Does Not Build Citizen Trust in Police or Reduce Crime in the Global South”. *Science* 374(6571): eabd3446.

**February 22: Policing III – *Mano dura* and Militarization of Policing**

Robert Blair and Michael Weintraub. “Military Policing Does Not Reduce Crime and May Exacerbate Human Rights Abuses.” Working paper.

Gustavo Flores-Macías and Jess Zarkin. Forthcoming. “The Militarization of Law Enforcement: Evidence from Latin America.” *Perspectives on Politics*.

*Recommended:*

Vincenzo Bove and Evelina Gavrilova. 2017. “Police Officer on the Frontline or a Soldier? The Effect of Police Militarization on Crime.” *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* 9(3): 1-18.

Beatriz Magaloni, Edgar Franco Vivanco, and Vanessa Melo. 2018. “Killing in the Slums: Social Order, Criminal Governance, and Police Violence in Rio de Janeiro.” Working paper. November.

**February 24: Policing IV – Police Violence and Reform**

*Today we will welcome Coronel Mauricio Carrillo, from the Office of Planeación, Policía Nacional de Colombia, and member of the Secretaría Técnica para el Proceso de Transformación de la Policía Nacional.*

Gary White and Natalia Alejandra Escobar Cadena. 2020. “Use of Police Force: a Framework to Ensure Good Governance Over the Use of Force.” Pages 6-9 (executive summary) and 15-19.

Casas Dupuy, Pablo. 2005. *Reformas y Contrarreformas en la Policía Colombiana.* 1-80.

**March 1: Police reform activity**

Today we will divide ourselves into 4 groups to think about desirable and achievable police reforms for Colombia. Each group should discuss and provide answers to the following questions:

* + What are the most urgent issues that any reform process should tackle?
  + What other police reform processes should inform the Colombian process, and why?
  + How would you structure the process itself to transform the Colombian National Police?
  + Who should be involved, who should be excluded? What role should civil society play? What role should the National Police itself play?
  + In an election year, what would you consider a victory for any police reform process?
  + How would you guarantee implementation of the recommendations? What are the most likely obstacles to implementation?

**March 3:** **Presentations and discussions about police reform**

Today students will present the results from the police reform activity. Each group should offer a maximum 8-minute presentation discussing their perspectives about police reform. Afterwards we will discuss points of tension and agreement among the competing proposals, to produce a single guiding document that I will present to the Secretaría Técnica del Proceso de Transformación de la Policía Nacional.

**March 8: Body-Warn Cameras**

Barak Ariel, Alex Sutherland, Darren Henstock, Josh Young, Paul Drover, Jayne Sykes, Simon Megicks, and Ryan Henderson. 2016. “Wearing Body Cameras Increases Assaults Against Officers and Does Not Reduce Police Use Of Force: Results from a Global Multi-Site Experiment.” *European Journal of Criminology*, 13(6): 744-755.

Magaloni, Beatriz, Vanessa Melo, and Gustavo Robles. “Warriors and Vigilantes as Police Officers: Evidence from a Field Experiment with Body-Cameras in Rio de Janeiro.” Working paper.

**March 10: Surveillance Cameras**

Santiago Gómez, Daniel Mejía, and Santiago Tobón. 2017. “The Deterrent Effect of Public Surveillance Cameras on Crime.” Documentos CEDE.

Mikael Priks. “The Effects of Surveillance Cameras on Crime: Evidence from the Stockholm Subway”. *The Economic Journal* 125(588): F289-F305.

Carlos Vilalta, Thomas W. Sanchéz, Gustavo Fondevila, and Magda Ramírez. “A Descriptive Model of The Relationship Between Police CCTV Systems and Crime: Evidence from Mexico City.” *Police Practice and Research*.

**March 15: Technology I – predictive policing**

Giovanni Mastrobuoni. 2020. “Crime is Terribly Revealing: Information Technology and Police Productivity.” *The Review of Economic Studies*, 87(6), 2727–2753.

**March 17: Technology II – DNA databases**

Doleac, Jennifer L. 2017. “The Effects of DNA Databases on Crime.” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 9(1): 165-201.

*The midterm exam will be distributed on March 17 and will be due on March 21.*

**March 22: No class, spring break**

**March 24: No class, spring break**

**March 29: Algorithms and Recidivism**

*This week we will welcome Daniel Mejía to discuss his experience implementing an algorithm to predict criminal recidivism when he was Director of Public Policy in the Attorney General’s Office.* ***Please arrive to class with three questions / concerns that you have about algorithms.***

Stevenson, Megan T. and Jennifer L. Doleac. “Algorithmic Risk Assessment in the Hands of Humans.” Working paper.

**March 31: How to Improve Criminal Investigation**

*This week we will welcome Juanita Durán to discuss her experience as Director of Public Policy in the Attorney General’s Office.* ***Please arrive to class with three questions / concerns that you have about criminal investigation (either generally or in Colombia specifically).***

Collazos, Daniela, Leopoldo Fergusson, Miguel La Rota, Daniel Mejía, and Daniel Ortega. 2020. “CSI in the Tropics: Experimental evidence of improved public service delivery through coordination.” CEDE

**April 5: Incarceration I**

*Today we will welcome Santiago Tobón, Visiting Professor at the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, and a Professor of Economics at Universidad EAFIT.* ***Please arrive to class with three questions / concerns that you have about prisons and/or recidivism.***

Santiago Tobón. Forthcoming. "Do better prisons reduce recidivism? Evidence from a prison construction program." *Review of Economics and Statistics.*

Charles E. Loeffler. “Does imprisonment alter the life course? Evidence on Crime and Employment from a Natural Experiment.” *Criminology*, 51(1):137–166, 2013.

Donald P. Green and Daniel Winik. 2010. “Using Random Judge Assignment to Estimate the Effects of Incarceration and Probation on Recidivism Among Drug Offenders.” *Criminology*, 48(2):357–387.

**April 7: Incarceration II**

David Skarbek. 2012. “Prison Gangs, Norms, and Organizations.” *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 82(1) 2012: 702-716.

Artega, Carolina. 2021. “Parental Incarceration and Children's Educational Attainment.” *Review of Economics & Statistics*.

Will Dobbie, Jacob Goldin, and Crystal S. Yang. 2018. “The effects of pre-trial detention on conviction, future crime, and employment: Evidence from randomly assigned judges.” American Economic Review, 108(2): 201-240.

Amanda Y. Agan, Jennifer L. Doleac and Anna Harvey. 2021. “Misdemeanor Prosecution.” NBER Working Paper 28600.

**April 12: No class – Holy Week**

**April 14: No class – Holy Week**

**April 19: Social reentry, jobs, and recidivism**

Anne Morrison Piehl. 2009. “Preparing Prisoners for Employment: The Power of Small Rewards.” The Manhattan Institute, Civic Report No. 57.

Philip J. Cook, Songman Kang, Anthony A. Braga, Jens Ludwig, and Mallory E. O’Brien. 2014. “An Experimental Evaluation of a Comprehensive Employment-Oriented Prisoner Re-entry Program.” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 31(3): 355-382.

Kevin T. Schnepel. 2016. “Good Jobs and Recidivism.” *The Economic Journal* 128(608): 447-469.

Sara B. Heller. 2014. “Summer Jobs Reduce Youth Violence Among Disadvantaged Youth.” *Science*, 346(6214): 1219-1223.

**April 21: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**

Sara B. Heller, Anuj K. Shah, Jonathan Guryan, Jens Ludwig, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Harold A. Pollack. 2015. “Thinking, Fast and Slow? Some Field Experiments to Reduce Crime and Dropout in Chicago.” *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 132(1): 1-54.

Christopher Blattman, Julian C. Jamison, and Margaret Sheridan. 2017. “Reducing Crime and Violence: Experimental Evidence from Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Liberia.” *American Economic Review* 107(4): 1165–1206.

**April 26: Alcohol**

*This week we will welcome Andrés Ham, to discuss our coauthored paper on bartenders and brawls in Bogotá.* ***Please arrive to class with three questions / concerns that you have about alcohol and its connection to violence.***

Andrés Ham, Darío Maldonado, Michael Weintraub, Andrés Felipe Camacho and Daniela Gualtero. 2021. “Reducing Alcohol-Related Violence with Bartenders: A Behavioral Field Experiment.” *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*.

D. Mark Anderson. 2018. “Wet Laws, Drinking Establishments and Violent Crime.” *The Economic Journal* 128(611): 1333-1366.

Charlie Carpenter and Carlos Dobkin. 2015. “The Minimum Legal Drinking Age and Crime.” *Review of Economics and Statistics* 97(2): 521–524.

**April 28: Drugs I – Production and Trafficking**

Evelina Gavrilova, Takuma Kamada, and Floris Zoutman. Forthcoming. “Is Legal Pot Crippling Mexican Drug Trafficking Organisations? The Effect of Medical Marijuana Laws on US Crime”. *The Economic Journal*.

Sviatschi, Maria Micaela. Forthcoming. “Making a Narco: Childhood Exposure to Illegal Labor Markets and Criminal Life Paths.” Econometrica.

*Recommended:*

Mejia, Daniel, Mounu Prem, and Juan F. Vargas. 2019. “The Rise and Persistence of Illegal Crops: Evidence from a Naive Policy Announcement.” Working paper.

Camacho, Adriana and Daniel Mejía. 2014. “Consecuencias de la aspersión aérea en la salud: evidencia desde el caso colombiano.” En *Costos Económicos y Sociales del Conflicto en Colombia,* ed. María Alejandra Arias, Adriana Camacho, Ana María Ibáñez, Daniel Mejía y Catherine Rodríguez.

**May 3: Drugs II – Consumption**

Packham, Analisa. “Are Syringe Exchange Programs Helpful or Harmful? New Evidence in the Wake of the Opioid Epidemic. NBER Working Paper #26111.

Jennifer L. Doleac and Anita Mukherjee. 2018. “The Moral Hazard of Lifesaving Innovations: Naloxone Access, Opioid Abuse, and Crime.” Working paper.

Carlos Dobkin and Steven L. Puller. 2007. “The Effects of Government Transfers on Monthly Cycles in Drug Abuse, Hospitalization and Mortality.” *Journal of Public Economics* 11-12: 2137-2157.

**May 5: Regulating access to guns**

Griffin Edwards, Erik Nesson, Joshua J. Robinson, and Fredrick Vars. 2018. “Looking Down the Barrel of a Loaded Gun: the Effect of Mandatory Handgun Purchase Delays on Homicide and Suicide.” Economic Journal, 128(616): 3117-3140.

Phillip B. Levine and Robin McKnight. 2017. “Firearms and accidental deaths: Evidence from the aftermath of the Sandy Hook school shooting.” Science, 358(6368): 1324-1328.

**May 10: Immigration and Crime**

Catalina Amuedo-Dorantes, Cynthia Bansak, and Susan Pozo. 2018. “Refugee Admissions and Public Safety: Are Refugee Settlement Areas More Prone to Crime?” IZA Discussion Paper No. 11612.

Daniel Masterson and Vasil I. Yasenov. 2018. “Does Halting Refugee Resettlement Reduce Crime? Evidence from the United States Refugee Ban.” Immigration Policy Lab Working Paper 18-03.

Markus Gehrsitz and Martin Ungerer. 2017. “Jobs, Crime, and Votes –  
A Short-Run Evaluation of the Refugee Crisis in Germany.” IZA Discussion Paper No. 10494

**May 12: Meeting with the teaching assistant to discuss final projects**

*Today in class you will workshop with the teaching assistant proposals for your final*

*projects.*

**May 17: No class**

**May 19: Gender-based violence and sex work**

Amanda Agan. 2011. “Sex Offender Registries: Fear without Function?” Journal of Law and Economics, 54(1): 207-239.

Bourgault, Shelby, Amber Peterman and Megan O’Donnell. 2021b. “Violence against Women and Children During COVID-19— One year on and 100 papers in.” Technical report, Center for Global Development.

Cunningham, Scott and Manisha Shah. 2017. “Decriminalizing Indoor Prostitution: Implications for Sexual Violence and Public Health.” Review of Economic Studies, 85(3): 1683-1715.

**May 25: Physical transportation infrastructure**

*This week we will welcome Leonardo Andrés Jiménez to discuss our joint work on metrocables in Bogotá, Medellín, and Cali.*

**May 27: Final presentations and conclusion**