

## **The International Politics of Organized Crime (Fall 2018)**

Instructor: Nicholas Barnes

E-mail: [nicholas\\_barnes@brown.edu](mailto:nicholas_barnes@brown.edu)

Location: Vartan Gregorian Quad 116B

Time: Tuesdays, 4:00pm – 6:30pm

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 4:00pm – 6:00pm (Watson Institute 314)

### **Course Overview and Objectives**

Over the course of the last several decades, organized crime and extra-legal actors have established themselves as important political actors in every region of the world. Violence has exploded in many countries as criminal organizations compete with each other, the state, as well as a variety of other non-state armed groups for control of illicit markets, local dominance, and political influence. They have also increasingly infiltrated and corrupted state institutions, manipulated democratic processes, acquired vast organizational and economic resources, and even established territorial control and governed local populations in many subnational regions. Organized crime is not, however, a new phenomenon and, over time, has manifested itself in numerous different forms as bandits, pirates, vigilante organizations, militias, drug trafficking cartels, street gangs, mafias, prison gangs, and smuggling networks, among others.

This course is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of these organizations, where they come from, and the various illegal and violent activities in which they are engaged. Over the course of the semester we will examine organized crime's origins and goals, how it functions, and its relationship to social and political institutions. This course is comparative and interdisciplinary in nature, drawing from research in criminology, sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science to gain analytical purchase on the various outcomes related to organized crime. While there exists a vast quantity of social science research on the different types of organized crime, this course encourages students to think about the commonalities and differences across these organizations and the contexts in which they operate. By the end of the course, students should be able to identify and communicate key findings of academic research on organized crime and will have developed an analytical toolkit that will be useful in several related academic disciplines.

The course is structured in three parts. In the first section, we focus on concepts and theories. We will explore a series of interrelated questions: What is organized crime? How do we differentiate it from other types of violent organizations? Where do these organizations come from? Why do they emerge and persist? In the second section, we then develop several perspectives from which to view the structures and activities of these organizations. We will also focus more explicitly on organized crime's political projects and their consequences for local and national-level politics. In the final section, we will briefly address how states and municipalities have attempted to combat these organizations. Throughout the semester, we delve into extended case studies on different criminal organizations in several regions of the world. These case studies are opportunities to put the conceptual and theoretical approaches to work. The readings for this course will primarily be comprised of sophisticated and theoretically-driven social scientific research but will also include investigative journalism, television and film treatments, and some other non-academic media.

## **Course Components**

### ***Attendance and Participation***

Attendance is required and participation is expected. I expect everyone to come to class having read *all* the required readings, be prepared to share their opinions, and seeking to actively engage with your fellow students. The in-class portion of the course is essential to understanding many of the more complex and nuanced arguments from the readings and is an opportunity for students to formulate and present some of their own ideas regarding the material. Also, be prepared to be involved in small group discussions, other learning activities, and dialogue-based learning.

A few basic ground rules:

- It is essential that the classroom remain a safe zone for all students regardless of sex, age, race, ethnic background, religion, sexual and political orientation, ability or disability.
- I expect you all to promote an active learning environment in the classroom by supporting each other intellectually, asking questions (of me and your fellow students), and by being respectful and patient.
- When you speak, remember that you are in dialogue not just with me, but with the entire class. Speak and listen to your classmates.

### ***Weekly Assignments***

Over the course of the semester, students will choose 6 weeks to write short responses (2 pages double-spaced) to the readings. Response questions will be posted a week in advance and are due 24 hours before class. Students should use these responses to ask questions, criticize arguments, and make connections between various readings as well as an opportunity to begin to explore the themes and arguments that will be developed at greater length in your research papers.

### ***Research Paper***

Over the course of the semester, you will outline, draft, and revise a 20-25 page research paper on a single criminal organization from anywhere in the world. This extended case study will be used to address one of the enduring theoretical or conceptual debates concerning the origins, structure, activities, or evolution of organized crime. Early in the semester you will choose a criminal organization and write an annotated bibliography of relevant sources. One month later, you will hand in a 3-5 page outline in which you lay out your argument and the organization of the paper. At the end of the semester, each student will make a 10-12 minute presentation about the progress of their research. These three assignments will be ungraded but I will provide extensive comments for each. You will submit the final draft of your paper during finals week. Failure to complete the final paper or the other assignments on time will result in a full letter grade penalty.

#### **Grading Breakdown:**

Attendance and Participation	30%
Weekly Assignments	30%
Research Paper	40%

#### **Grading Scale:**

A=100-90; B=89-80; C=79-70; 69 and below=NC.

## **Electronic Etiquette**

The use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices will not be allowed during class time. For administrative concerns and simple clarifying questions, please feel free to e-mail me. For more substantive questions, come see me in office hours. I will try to respond to any e-mails within 24 hours during the week but do not expect me to respond to e-mails over the weekend.

## **Coursework Allotment**

Over 14 weeks, students will spend 3 hours per week in class (42 hours total). Required reading for the seminar meetings is expected to take up approximately 7 hours per week (98 hours total). In addition, writing and researching weekly writing assignments and the final paper is estimated at a total of approximately 40 hours over the course of the term.

## **Academic Integrity**

You must maintain academic integrity at all times. Plagiarism/cheating are the most serious academic crimes you can commit, and I will pursue any infringements seriously and actively. The University Honor Code will be in effect through all exams, quizzes, and written assignments. Please read carefully the provisions of the [Honor Code](#), make certain you understand and adhere to them, and ask me to clarify any questions you have.

## **Accessibility and Accommodations Statement**

Brown University is committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you have a disability or other conditions that might require accommodations or modification of any of these course procedures. You can speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information, please contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863- 9588 or [SEAS@brown.edu](mailto:SEAS@brown.edu).

## **Course Materials**

Any syllabus on this topic is inherently incomplete. This course intends to provide advanced undergraduate students an overview some of the most prominent research on the subject. The readings are primarily comprised of peer-reviewed journal articles and excerpts from academic books as well as several in-depth journalistic accounts. The readings are both sophisticated and numerous. Students should be prepared to cover a lot of material. Moreover, we will pay particular attention to the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of these works and, by the end of the semester, students should be able to evaluate between these various approaches and identify strengths and weaknesses of each. The following list of books can be purchased online and the rest of the articles and book chapters will be available via Canvas. Estimated cost from amazon.com is in italics (*New/Used*).

Karina Biondi. 2016. *Sharing This Walk: An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. (\$24.95/\$19.37; *also available for free online at JSTOR*)

- Durán-Martínez, Angélica. 2018. *The Politics of Drug Violence: Criminals, Cops and Politicians in Colombia and Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (\$29.95/\$30.29)
- Gambetta, Diego. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. (\$29.56/\$13.71)
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1969. *Bandits*. New York: The New Press. (\$18.85/\$5.78)
- Lessing, Benjamin. 2018. *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. (\$33.24/\$29.59)
- Saviano, Roberto. 2006. *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System*. New York: Picador. (\$13.40/\$1.99)
- Skarbek, David. 2014. *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (\$19.80/\$11.50)
- Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. New York: Penguin Press. (\$8.81/\$2.12)

### ***Expenses and Financial Concerns***

*Brown University undergraduates with concerns about the non-tuition cost(s) of a course at Brown, including this course, may apply to the Dean of the College Academic Emergency Fund to determine options for financing these costs, while ensuring their privacy. Information and procedures are available at this link:*

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/college/advising/financial-advising/e-gap-funds>.

### **Course Schedule**

**September 11.** *Introduction/Overview*

**September 18.** *Case Study: Italian Camorra (320 pgs. and 2 hours of film)*

Saviano, Roberto. 2006. *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System*. New York: Picador.

*Gomorra*. 2008. Dir. by Matteo Garrone. 137 minutes.

**September 25.** *Introduction: What is Organized Crime? (286 pgs.)*

Abadinsky, Howard. 2013. *Organized Crime*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth. Chapters 1 and 3 (35 pgs.).

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. 2002. *Results of a Pilot Survey of Forty Selected Organized Criminal Groups in Sixteen Countries*. Vienna: UNODC. Pgs. 1-123.

Geneva Declaration Secretariat. 2011. *A Unified Approach to Armed Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Pgs. 11-42.

Jennifer M. Hazen and Dennis Rodgers. 2014. "Gangs in a Global Comparative

- Perspective.” In *Global Gangs: Street Violence across the World*, eds. Jennifer M. Hazen and Dennis Rodgers. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Pgs. 1-26.
- Varese, Federico. 2010. “What is Organized Crime?” In *Organized Crime*, ed. Federico Varese. Abingdon, UK: Routledge. Pgs 1-33.
- Schelling, Thomas C. 1971. “What Is the Business of Organized Crime?” *The American Scholar* 40(4): 643–52.
- Skaperdas, Stergios. 2001. “The Political Economy of Organized Crime: Providing Protection When the State Does Not.” *Economics of Governance* 2(3): 173–202.

**October 2.** *Conceptual Issues: Competing Understandings (124 pgs.)*

- Barnes, Nicholas. 2017. “Criminal Politics: An Integrated Approach to the Study of Organized Crime, Politics, and Violence.” *Perspectives on Politics* 15(4): 967–87.
- Kalyvas, Stathis N. 2015. “How Civil Wars Help Explain Organized Crime—and How They Do Not.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(8): 1517–40.
- Shirk, David, and Joel Wallman. 2015. “Understanding Mexico’s Drug Violence.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59(8): 1348–76.
- Naím, Moisés. 2012. “Mafia States: Organized Crime Takes Office.” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2012-04-20/mafia-states>, accessed September 15, 2016.
- Rodgers, Dennis. 2006. “The State as a Gang: Conceptualizing the Governmentality of Violence in Contemporary Nicaragua.” *Critique of Anthropology* 26(3): 315–30.
- Tilly, Charles. 1985. “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime.” In *Bringing the State Back In*, eds. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. New York: Cambridge University Press. Pgs. 169-187.

**October 9.** *Historical Perspectives: Bandits and the State (226 pgs. and 2 hours of film)*

**\*\*Annotated Bibliography due**

- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1969. *Bandits*. New York: The New Press.
- Salvatore Guiliano. 1962. Dir. by Francesco Rosi. 123 minutes.

**October 16.** *Theoretical Perspectives I: Democratization (222 pgs.)*

- Gambetta, Diego. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction and chapters 1–6 (155 pgs.).
- Varese, Federico. 1994. “Is Sicily the Future of Russia? Private Protection and the Rise of the Russian Mafia.” *European Journal of Sociology* (83): 224–58.
- Cruz, José Miguel. 2011. “Criminal Violence and Democratization in Central America: The Survival of the Violent State.” *Latin American Politics and Society* 53(4): 1–33.

**October 23.** *Theoretical Perspectives II: Drugs and the State (354 pgs.)*

Lessing, Benjamin. 2018. *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

**October 30.** *Theoretical Perspectives III: Drugs and the State (328 pgs.)*

Durán-Martínez, Angélica. 2018. *The Politics of Drug Violence: Criminals, Cops and Politicians in Colombia and Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**November 6.** *Case Study: the Primeiro Comando do Capital of São Paolo (176 pgs. and 2.5 hours of film)*

Karina Biondi. 2016. *Sharing This Walk: An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.  
*Carandiru*. 2003. Dir. by Hector Babenco. 145 minutes.

**November 13.** *Case Study: California Prison Gangs (168 pgs. and 2 hours of film)*

**\*\*Paper outline due**

Skarbek, David. 2014. *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
*American Me*. 1992. Dir. by Edward James Olmos. 126 minutes.

**November 20.** *Organized Crime and the State (183 pgs. and 1.5 hours of film)*

Arias, Enrique Desmond. 2017. *Criminal Enterprises and Governance in Latin America and the Caribbean*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Introduction and chapters 1-3 (107 pgs.)  
Smith, Nicholas Rush. 2015. "Rejecting Rights: Vigilantism and Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *African Affairs* 114(456): 341–60.  
Weinstein, Liza. 2008. "Mumbai's Development Mafias: Globalization, Organized Crime and Land Development." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 32(1): 22–39.  
LeBas, Adrienne. 2013. "Violence and Urban Order in Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48(3): 240–62.  
Bauer, Shane. 2016. "Undercover with a Border Militia" *Mother Jones*, November/December. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2016/10/undercover-border-militia-immigration-bauer>.  
*Cartel Land*. 2015. Dir. by Matthew Heineman. 100 minutes.

**November 27.** *Case Study: Chicago Gangs (320 pgs. and 2.5 hours of film)*

Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. *Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the*

*Streets*. New York: Penguin Press.  
*The Interrupters*. 2011. Dir. by Steve James. 162 minutes.

**December 4.** *Student Presentations*

**December 11.** *Student Presentations*

**\*\*Full draft of research paper due by December 18**