

THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICS OF ORGANIZED CRIME (POL-395) SPRING 2020

Classroom: HSSC S2310
Time: Monday, Wednesday, 2:00pm – 3:50pm

Professor Nicholas Barnes
E-mail: barnesni@grinnell.edu
Office: HSSC S3334

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 4:00pm – 6:00pm, Fridays, 1:00pm – 3:00pm
Sign up for office hours here: <https://nicholasbarnes.youcanbook.me>

COURSE OVERVIEW

Over the course of the last several decades, a variety of different criminal organizations have established themselves as important political actors in every region of the world. Violence has exploded in many countries as they compete with each other and the state 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. Over time, it has manifested itself in numerous different forms such as bandits, pirates, vigilante groups, militias, drug 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 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 and the role of women in organized crime. Throughout the semester, we delve into extended case studies on different criminal organizations. 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 Goals

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Describe what organized crime is and why it emerges.
2. Analyze the behavior and evolution of organized crime within existing theoretical paradigms.
3. Write and speak intelligently and persuasively about organized crime.
4. Develop in-depth knowledge about at least one criminal organizations.
5. Complete a 300-level research project.

Prerequisites

POL 250, 251, 255, 257, 258, 295, 261, 262, 273, or 295 Politics of South Asia/Gender in Developing Countries

COURSE COMPONENTS AND EVALUATION

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 as well as other active 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.

Attendance and participation will be 25% of your final grade. To get all 25% you must attend all meetings of the course and fully participate in discussion and group activities. The bar for participation is not high—I should observe that you are fully engaged with the material and making comments and/or questions during most of the scheduled classes.

UNEXCUSED ABSENCES: Each student is allowed one unexcused absence per semester. Each further unexcused absence will result in a penalty of 2% from the course grade. Any more than four unexcused absences will result in a zero participation grade. If you feel a future or ongoing absence ought to be excused, you must communicate that to me at least 24 hours before the class meets. Athletes and students with accommodations must also bring me documentation in advance of the absence. Late notification is appreciated but will not be accommodated.

Written Assignments

This course seeks to equip students with the critical thinking and analytical writing skills necessary for engaging with higher-level social science scholarship. In this regard, students will

write two short (1500 word) papers that address one particular subset of the readings. Students should focus their first paper on analyzing one of the key concepts while the second paper should focus on a particular theory or theoretical approach. In each paper, students should integrate and analyze several of the readings while pointing out the weaknesses or what they see as a gap in the literature and grapple with the implications of their assessments. Due: 3/4 and 4/13.

Research Paper

Over the course of the semester, you will outline, draft, and revise a 18-20 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 a preliminary proposal for a research project (due 2/12). One month later, you will hand in an annotated bibliography (due 3/30). 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 (due 4/22). At the end of the semester, each student will make a 10-12 minute presentation about the progress of their research. You will submit the final draft of your paper during finals week.

Grading Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation	25%
Two Short Papers	20%
Paper Proposal	5%
Annotated Bibliography	5%
Paper Outline	5%
In-class Presentation	10%
Research Paper	30%

Grading Scale:

A=100-93; A-=93-90; B+=90-87; B=87-83; B-=83-80; C+=80-77; C=77-70; D=69-60; 59 and below=F.

CLASS POLICIES

Technology

The use of laptops, cell phones, and other electronic devices will NOT be allowed during class time *except* during quizzes. If you have an overriding reason why you need to be able to use these technologies during class, come talk to me (see also the Accommodations section below).

Communication

How should you communicate with me? The best way for me to answer your questions and provide you guidance in this course is in my OFFICE HOURS. Please come to them! You can sign up here: For administrative concerns and simple clarifying questions, you can also e-mail me. 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. If you are wondering how to write appropriate and professional emails, check these websites out for some guidance: [here](#) and [here](#).

Academic Integrity

You must maintain academic integrity at all times. Plagiarism and cheating are the most serious academic crimes you can commit, and I will pursue any infringements seriously and actively. I also employ anti-plagiarism software for all of the written documents you will be submitting. Please read carefully the provisions of “Academic Honesty: Scholarly Integrity, Collaboration, and the Ethical Use of Sources at Grinnell College,” available [here](#). Make certain you understand and adhere to them. Ask me to clarify any questions you have.

Accessibility and Accommodations Statement

I strive to create a fully inclusive classroom, thus I welcome individual students to approach me about distinctive learning needs. Please inform me early in the term if you have a documented disability, including invisible disabilities such as chronic illness, learning disabilities, and/or psychiatric disabilities to discuss appropriate accommodations with me. You will also need to have a conversation about and provide documentation of your disability to the Coordinator for Student Disability Resources, John Hirschman, located on the 3rd floor of the Goodnow Hall (x3089). Please feel free to speak with me after class or during office hours about these issues.

READINGS AND 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.

- 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. (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.
- Gambetta, Diego. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1969. *Bandits*. New York: The New Press.
- Lessing, Benjamin. 2018. *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Saviano, Roberto. 2006. *Gomorra: A Personal Journey into the Violent International Empire of Naples' Organized Crime System*. New York: Picador.
- Skarbek, David. 2014. *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, January 24: Introduction/Overview

Monday, January 27: What is Organized Crime? (61 pgs.)

- 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.

Wednesday, January 29: What is a gang? (105 pgs.)

- 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.
- Hagedorn, John M. 2008. "Globalizing Gangs." In *World of Gangs: Armed Young Men and Gangsta Culture*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Introduction and chapter 1-4.
- Miguel Cruz, José. 2010. "Central American maras: from youth street gangs to transnational protection rackets." *Global Crime* 11(4): 379–398.

Monday, February 3: In-class Film

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

Wednesday, February 5: Visit to Burling Library

Monday, February 10: The Neapolitan Camorra (155 pgs.)

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

Wednesday, February 12: Conceptual Issues (33 pgs.)

*****Final Paper proposal due*****

- 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.

Monday, February 17: Crime and Violence in Rio de Janeiro (49 pgs.)

Class visit by Henrique Gomes and Andreza Jorge

Fahlberg, Anjuli N. 2018. "Rethinking Favela Governance: Nonviolent Politics in Rio de Janeiro's Gang Territories." *Politics & Society* 46(4): 485–512.

Barnes, Nicholas. 2019. "Military Occupation and Criminal Governance in Rio de Janeiro." *Working Paper*.

Wednesday, February 19: Bandits and the State (45 pgs.)

Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1969. *Bandits*. New York: The New Press. Chapters 1–5.

Monday, February 24: Bandits and the State (67 pgs. and 2 hours of film)

Hobsbawm, Eric J. 1969. *Bandits*. New York: The New Press. Chapters 7–8, Appendix A (Women in Banditry), and Postscript.

Salvatore Giuliano. 1962. Dir. by Francesco Rosi. 123 minutes.

Wednesday, February 26: Democratization I (71 pgs.)

Gambetta, Diego. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Introduction and chapters 1–3.

Monday, March 2: Democratization II (55 pgs.)

Gambetta. Chapters 4–5.

Wednesday, March 4: Democratization III (67 pgs. and 1.5 hours of film)

****Short Paper #1 due****

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.

Brat. 1997. Dir. by Aleksei Balabanov. 100 minutes.

Monday, March 9: Fighting the State I (98 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.

Lessing, Benjamin. 2018. *Making Peace in Drug Wars: Crackdowns and Cartels in Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Chapters 1–2.

Phillips, Brian J. 2019. "Would Trump label Mexican cartels terrorist organizations?"
Monkey Cage. March 26. [Link](#).

Wednesday March 11: Fighting the State II (70 pgs.)

Lessing. Chapters 3, 8, and ONE of 5, 6, or 7.

SPRING BREAK

Monday, March 30: In-class Film

****Annotated Bibliography due****

Frontline: Drug Wars. 2000. Dir. by Kenneth Levis. 114 minutes.

Wednesday, April 1: Drug Violence I (65 pgs.)

Durán-Martínez, Angélica. 2018. *The Politics of Drug Violence: Criminals, Cops and Politicians in Colombia and Mexico*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-2.

Monday, April 6: Drug Violence II (65 pgs.)

Durán-Martínez. Chapter 3 and ONE of 4, 5, or 6.

Wednesday, April 8: Prison Gangs I (67 pgs.)

Biondi, Karina. 2016. *Sharing This Walk: An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press. Introduction and chapter 1.

Lessing, Benjamin & Graham Denyer Willis. 2019. "Legitimacy in criminal governance: Managing a drug empire from behind bars." *American Political Science Review* 113(2): 584–606.

Monday, April 13: Prison Gangs II (38 pgs.)

****Short Paper #2 due****

Skarbek, David. 2014. *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Chapters 1 and 3.

Wednesday, April 15: Prison Gangs III (50 pgs. and 2 hours of film)

Skarbek. Chapters 4-5.

American Me. 1992. Dir. by Edward James Olmos. 126 minutes.

Monday, April 20: Collaborating with the State (41 pgs. and 1.5 hours of film)

- Smith, Nicholas Rush. 2015. "Rejecting Rights: Vigilantism and Violence in Post-Apartheid South Africa." *African Affairs* 114(456): 341–60.
- LeBas, Adrienne. 2013. "Violence and Urban Order in Nairobi, Kenya and Lagos, Nigeria." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 48(3): 240–62.
- Cartel Land*. 2015. Dir. by Matthew Heineman. 100 minutes.

Wednesday, April 22: Negotiating with the State (25 pgs.)

*****Paper Outline due*****

- Cruz, José Miguel & Angélica Durán-Martinez. 2016. "Hiding violence to deal with the state: Criminal pacts in El Salvador and Medellín." *Journal of Peace Research* 53(2): 197–210.

Monday, April 27: Women and Organized Crime (65 pgs.)

- Allum, Felia and Irene Marchi. 2018. "Analyzing the Role of Women in Italian Mafias: The Case of the Neapolitan Camorra." *Qualitative Sociology* 41(3): 361–380.
- Reguly, Eric and Lorenzo Tondo. 2016. "The Rise of the Godmother," *The Globe and the Mail*. October 27. [Link](#).
- Perry, Alex. 2018. "The Women Who Took on the Mafia," *The New Yorker*. January 22. [Link](#).

Wednesday, April 29: In-class work session

Monday, May 4: In-class presentations

Wednesday, May 6: In-class presentations

*****Full draft of final paper due for in-class final*****