Immigration and Crime

University of Toronto

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Course Description

Immigration and crime have a long tradition of being inextricably connected, not only in the public mind, but also among policymakers. Though the question whether there is a nexus between immigration and crime is discussed widely, a clear answer has yet to be found. Whether speaking of an immigration and crime nexus means that immigrants are thought to be more criminal before they migrate (i.e., criminal members of the sending society tend to migrate more often than non criminal members), turn to a criminal lifestyle after settling in the new country (i.e., due to social, political, and/or economical exclusion), or become criminal through the process of immigration itself (hence, immigration causes immigrants or non immigrants or even both to engage in crime) seems unclear. The fact is that members of some disadvantaged minority groups in every Western country are disproportionately likely to be arrested, convicted, and imprisoned for violent, property, and drug crimes. However, not all disadvantaged immigrant groups have higher crime rates than the native born. In fact, most have lower crime rates and recent research findings show that immigration may even contribute to a decrease of the overall crime rate.

Though specifics vary from country to country, Western societies in particular repeatedly state concerns about immigration and crime. Public opinion has frequently linked trends in immigration to social problems in the country, and has been especially concerned about a possible relationship between rising numbers of immigrants and levels of crime and violence. In the public mind, the post 9/11 period has illuminated immigration and religion in the context of terrorism. As a result, many countries have begun to control immigration in the name of safeguarding their nations against terrorism. At the same time, religious profiling and discrimination – especially against Muslim immigrants – seem to be increasing. This course will explore whether the public perception that immigration increases crime (and terrorism) is actually true. We will analyze the links between immigration and crime by looking at and comparing the experiences of North America and Europe. The course will not only explore if and why immigrants commit more or less crime, but will also look at how criminal law and criminality have become increasingly affected by notions of citizenship in a period of globalization and mass mobility. The course will look at undocumented migrants (illegal immigration) and the control of borders as well as trends in punishment of foreigners (particularly in Europe) and their deportation. Finally, we also consider immigrants as victims of crime in various countries.

Course Schedule
**Introduction to the course**


**The International-Crime Nexus: theoretical background**


**Crime and Immigration: The US**


**Crime and Immigration: Canada**


**Crime and Immigration: Northern Europe**


The Second Generation Effect


Co-offending and Migration: Gangs and Organised Crime


Borders and Illegal immigration


Citizenship and Punishment

• Lacey, N. 2008. The Prisoners’ Dilemma. Political Economy and Punishment in Contemporary Democracies, New York, CUP. (pp 144-169)

Deportation

Crimes against Migrants and the War on Terror