This course examines police and policing in 21st century Britain and beyond. It considers processes of change and stability in the organizational and institutional structures of policing, and their implications for criminal justice and for wider society.

**Topics covered**

1) Policing and social order
2) Policing, privatization and markets
3) Policing, legitimacy and democracy
4) Governing policing
5) Change and innovation in police organizations
6) The ‘scientific turn’ in policing
7) Policing, harm reduction and public health
8) Revision session - debating stop and search

**General introductory reading**

There is no single text assigned for the course. However, students with no prior knowledge of policing who would like to get up-to-speed with the literature and debates are advised to consult the following texts:


Other useful introductions/overviews/tasters of the issues we tackle on the course are:


Reading and seminar preparation

You are expected to come to classes having read between 150-200 pages of reading each week. Note that in many weeks the readings listed exceed this limit – if this is the case simply select those that appeal most. You should be prepared to participate in discussion of the seminar questions, and any other issues that may have arisen from their reading, with the course tutor and other members of the class. Reading the required and suggested materials, digesting them and making preparatory notes should take approximately 10 hours a week.

Students may be expected to make presentations to the class during the course. We will also ask students to submit a question for discussion based on their reading the day before each seminar.

Please remember: the seminars are occasions for thinking and discussion not extensive note taking. So there is no need to bring a lap-top.
Seminar 1 - Policing and social order

In this session we consider the basic question of the contribution of policing to social order. What is it, precisely, that policing is concerned with? Specific question include:

- What do the police ‘do’?
- Are the police concerned mainly with law, with order, or with something else?
- How can we define 'the police' in an era when many different bodies are engaged in the activity of policing?
- What is the relationship between the activities of the uniformed, professional police and broader processes of social control?

Key readings


Additional readings


Seminar 2 - Policing, privatization and markets

While the British police retain a dominant position in the field of policing there have always been private security workers in the UK, and their number is growing. Elsewhere, private policing is in some countries established as a serious contender to the public police's position as monopolist of legitimate violence. This trend looks set to continue, for all that it is cut across by countervailing forces that have increased the power of the public police. Key questions for this seminar include:

- What is private policing?
- Does the role of private police differ from that of the public police, and if so, how?
- Although there has always been private policing, in many Western democracies the use of alternative security providers appears to have grown in importance in recent years. Why?
- Are public police institutions increasingly being driven by market logics? If so, with what consequences?
- What does the growth in private policing tell us about change in the relationship between citizen and state?
- Is security a commodity?

Key readings


Additional readings


Seminar 3 - Policing, legitimacy and democracy
This session covers the issue of legitimacy, with a particular emphasis on (a) what makes the police legitimate in the eyes of the policed and (b) what is the relationship between the legitimacy of the police and wider modes of democratic governance? Specific questions include:

- What do we mean by legitimacy in the context of policing?
- Is police legitimacy 'in the eye of the beholder' or established with reference to externally validated norms (of legality, justice or conduct)?
- From what sources do the police draw their legitimacy? For example, is the demonstration of effectiveness in the 'fight against crime' the key issue?
- What are the implications for legitimacy of different policing policies and ‘styles’? Could some tend to undermine legitimacy, while others enhance it?
- What contribution does legitimate policing make to the possibility (indeed, plausibility) of democratic government?

Key readings


Additional readings


**Seminar 4 - Governing policing**
This session addresses the institutional implications of our discussion of legitimacy and democracy, with a particular emphasis on the tensions and dilemmas involved in how to subject policing institutions to democratic governance and effective oversight and redress. Specific questions include:

- Who are the police accountable to – government, citizens, law, professional bodies?
- What role should elected politicians have in the governance of policing?
- Can the police be responsive to citizens without risking ‘the tyranny of the majority’?
- Are the police best controlled through internal or external regulation?
- How can police complaints arrangements best be made effective?

**Key readings**


**Additional readings**


**Seminar 5 - Change and innovation in police organizations**
In this session we consider the question of police reform. How, when and to what extent do police organizations change, and who are the main agents of this change? We will be joined in this seminar by a representative of a UK policing organization, who will give us ‘the view from the inside’.

Questions for this session include:

- Is the need for reform a constant across police organizations?
- Who are the major ‘agents of change’ in policing?
- What are the barriers to police reform?
- Is genuine reform of the police possible?

Key readings


Additional readings


Seminar 6 – The ‘scientific turn’ in policing

A key trend within the police service, and within academic study of police activity, is a turn towards the 'scientific method'. Beyond the obvious arenas of forensics and criminal investigation, scientific techniques such as Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs) and systematic reviews are becoming increasingly important as tools of investigation and, equally, as ways of legitimising specific approaches to policing. This seminar has two purposes. First, we will examine the use of RCTs and systematic reviews as ways of creating knowledge in policing contexts. Second, we will critically evaluate the assumptions underlying the uses to which such tools are put? Key questions will include:

- What is the vision of policing involved here?
- How does the ‘scientific turn’ in policing relate to issues of legitimacy and governance?
- If a police tactic is proven to ‘work’ in terms of reducing crime, is this enough in and of itself to justify using it? How do we calibrate other factors against ‘what works’?

Key readings


Additional readings

Hotspots policing:


Focussed Deterrence


Seminar 7 – New challenges to policing

In this session we will examine the ways in which policing is being reconfigured in the face of changing patterns of crime and continuing pressure on police budgets. These changes take various forms: the involvement of new non-police actors in policing tasks; the focusing of policing on new crimes and the setting of new rationales and overarching goals for the police. In considering this new landscape, the questions to consider will include:

- Where and on what should police organizations concentrate scarce resources?
- What other actors might step in if uniformed police services are withdrawn?
- What is third-party policing? What are the pros and cons of persuading or coercing non-police actors to become involved in policing tasks?
- How can the internet be policing, and by who?
- Is policing best understood as an agency that contributes to public health?
- Can ‘public health’ campaigns add to or even substitute for the role of the uniformed police?

Key readings


Third-party policing:


Additional readings


Seminar 8 – Revision session - debating stop and search

In this final session we discuss a perennially controversial aspect of policing in the UK and many other contexts beside: stop and search. This provides for a useful summary/revision process that revisits many of the themes discussed in earlier weeks of the course. The class will be divided into two groups to debate the proposition: *Stop and search be abolished*. In preparing their case each group will need to consider the following questions:

- What is stop and search intended to achieve – crime control, order maintenance, or something else?
- Why, when it is available, do some police use this power as much as they do?
- What are the challenges for police legitimacy generated by use of this power?
- How do issues of race/ethnicity shape and interact with police practice?
- Are other ways of doing policing possible and/or desirable, and if so what are they?

Key readings


Additional readings

