

The Politics of the War on Drugs

Boston University

Fall 2018

PO300B1: Special Topics in American Politics: Politics of the War on Drugs

Dates: September 4 – December 17, 2018

Time: Monday/Wednesday/ Friday, 11:15 am-12:05 pm

Instructor: Laura Blume

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday 12:30 – 2 pm, or by appointment

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Course Overview

This course explores the modern history of the United States' counter-narcotics policy, or as it is commonly referred to, the "War on Drugs." This course aims to examine both the domestic and international implications of the long-standing US prohibitionist policy, as well as the potential for change. We begin reviewing the history of the "War on Drugs," what motivated various policy developments and how policy has shifted over time. Then we explore the domestic implications, particularly mass incarceration and police militarization. Next, we move on to look at the international implications of the drug war, including rising violence in Mexico and Central America, the US role in the region's militarization as well as illegal arms trade, the consequences for nascent democracies in the region, and the often overlooked environmental damage that accompanies the drug trade. We then examine two "hot topics" in terms of drug policy – the shift towards legalizing marijuana and the opioid crisis in the US. For both these topics, we pay close attention to the role of lobbyists and also consider the international as well as domestic implications. Finally, we wrap-up by exploring the potential for changing drug policy, pulling together the entirety of the course material while considering both the domestic and international stake holders.

Grading

Participation 25%

Discussion Questions 10%

Response Papers 35%

Final Exam 30%

Discussion Questions

To demonstrate that you're keeping up with the assigned readings and in order to foster interesting class discussions on the issues that most intrigue you, I will ask each of you to e-mail me 2 discussion questions that pertain to the readings before class (a minimum of 1 hour before class starts). I will use selections from these questions to guide our class discussions of the readings.

Response Papers

You will be required to write two response papers during the course. For both papers you will be asked to watch a documentary and connect it to the relevant course readings and materials. Papers should be written in size 12, Times New Roman font, with 1 inch margins and be 5 - 6 pages double spaced. Both documentaries are available on Netflix and several other streaming services. For response paper 1 the documentary is *Freeway: Crack in the System* (2015) and for response paper 2 the documentary is *Cartel Land* (2015). Due dates are indicated in the course schedule.

Exam

Date of exam indicated on syllabus. Rescheduling of the final exam is only permitted due to a documented excused absence (e.g. jury duty, family death, health emergency). The exam will consist primarily of identifications. These will be pulled from a list of key terms which students will be provided with in advance as a study guide. Students will be expected to identify the term and write a few sentences on its significance.

Class Expectations

I expect students to come to class having done all of the reading assigned for that day and to be ready to participate in discussions. It is essential to attend classes. Unexcused absences or consistent late arrivals will impact participation grades.

While I hope it doesn't need to be stated explicitly, I expect students to be respectful of each other's opinions and to foster an environment that is inclusive and encourages participation from all. Many topics covered are quite sensitive and I hope students will be respectful and cognizant of the fact that not all students come from the same background and experiences. I expect students to adhere to the BU honor policy and to avoid plagiarism (resources on these policies can be found here: [Academic Code of Conduct](#)).

Class and Reading Schedule

Wednesday, September 5: Introduction & Course Overview

Friday, September 7: The Origins of Prohibition

Michael M. Cohen, "Jim Crow's Drug War: Race, Coca Cola, and the Southern Origins of Drug Prohibition." *Southern Cultures*, 12:3, 2006, pp. 55-79.

Gabriela Recio, "Drugs and Alcohol: US Prohibition and the Origins of the Drug Trade in Mexico, 1910-1930." *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Feb., 2002), pp. 21-42

Monday, September 10: The Origins of Prohibition (Part 2)

Katherine Beckett, "Setting the Public Agenda: 'Street Crime' and Drug Use in American Politics." *Social Problems* 41.3 (1994): 425-447.

Paul Gootenberg. "Between Coca and Cocaine: A Century or More of U.S.-Peruvian Drug Paradoxes, 1860–1980." *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83:1, 2003.

Wednesday, September 12: The Crack Scare

Philippe Bourgois. "Crack in Spanish Harlem: Culture and Economy in the Inner City." *Anthropology Today* 5.4 (1989): 6-11.

Craig Reinerman and Harry G. Levine, "Crack in Context: Politics and Media in the Making of a Drug Scare," *Contemporary Drug Problems*, Winter 1989, 535 – 569.

Friday, September 14: The Cold War & The Drug War

Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Chapter 1 and 2.

Monday, September 17: The Cold War & The Drug War (Part 2)

Peter Dale Scott and Jonathan Marshall, *Cocaine Politics: Drugs, Armies, and the CIA in Central America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Chapter 3.

Wednesday, September 19: Militarization in the Andes & The Panama Invasion

Peter Zirnite, Martin Jelsma, and Coletta Youngers. *Reluctant Recruits: The US Military And The War On Drugs*. Washington Office on Latin America, 1997. (Executive Summary/ skim)

Jonah Walters. "'Just Cause' and Its Aftermath." *Jacobin*, May 31, 2017.

Friday, September 21: Plan Colombia

Franz, Tobias. "Plan Colombia: Illegal Drugs, Economic Development And Counterinsurgency– A Political Economy Analysis Of Colombia's Failed War." *Development Policy Review* 34.4 (2016): 563-591.

Garry Leech. "Plan Petroleum in Putumayo." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 37.6 (2004): 8-11.

Monday, September 24: Plan Colombia (Part 2)

Jason Vauters and Michael LR Smith. "A Question of Escalation-From Counternarcotics to Counterterrorism: Analysing US Strategy in Colombia." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 17.2 (2006): 163-196.

Dana Priest. "Covert Action in Colombia." *Washington Post*, December 21, 2013.

Wednesday, September 26: War on Drugs meets War on Terror

Alfred McCoy. "How the Heroin Trade Explains the US-UK Failure in Afghanistan." *The Guardian*, January 9, 2018.

Tamara Makarenko. "The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing The Interplay Between Transnational Organised Crime And Terrorism." *Global Crime* 6.1 (2004): 129-145.

Friday, September 28: War on Drugs meets War on Terror (Part 2)

Ginger Thompson. "Trafficking in Terror: How Closely Entwined are the Drug Trade and Global Terrorism?" *The New Yorker*, December 14, 2015.

Monday, October 1: The Meth "Epidemic"

Travis Linnemann. "Governing Through Meth: Local Politics, Drug Control and the Drift Toward Securitization." *Crime, Media, Culture* 9.1 (2013): 39-61.

Travis Linnemann. "Mad Men, Meth Moms, Moral Panic: Gendering Meth Crimes in the Midwest." *Critical Criminology* 18.2 (2010): 95-110.

Wednesday, October 3: Mass Incarceration

Excerpt from Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. (New York: The New Press, 2012).

Friday, October 5: CLASS CANCELED

Monday, October 8: Columbus Day Holiday (No Class)

Tuesday, October 9 (Substitute Monday Schedule of Classes): Mass Incarceration (Part 2)

Heather Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History," *Journal of American History* 97:3 (December 2010), 703-734.

Todd R. Clear, "The Effects Of High Imprisonment Rates On Communities." *Crime and Justice* 37.1 (2008): 97-132.

Wednesday, October 10: Mass Incarceration (Part 3)

John C. Drake, "Locked up and Counted out: Bringing an End to Prison-based Gerrymandering." *Journal of Law & Policy* 37 (2011): 237.

Friday, October 12: Mandatory Minimums (*Guest Lecturer: Sarah Sklar*)

Shimica Gaskins. “Women of Circumstance: The Effects of Mandatory Minimum Sentencing on Women Minimally Involved in Drug Crimes.” *American Criminal Law Review* 41 (2004): 1533.

Marc Mauer, “The Impact of Mandatory Minimum Penalties in Federal Sentencing.” *Judicature* Vol.94, No. 1, September 22, 2010.

Monday, October 15: Civil Asset Forfeiture (*Guest Lecturer: Sarah Sklar*)

Katherine Baicker and Mireille Jacobson. “Finders Keepers: Forfeiture Laws, Policing Incentives, and Local Budgets.” *Journal of Public Economics* 91.11-12 (2007): 2113-2136.

Wednesday, October 17: Militarization

Excerpt from Radley Balko. *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces*. (New York: *Public Affairs*, 2014).

Friday, October 19: Militarization (Part 2)

Casey Delehanty, et al. “Militarization and Police Violence: The Case of the 1033 Program.” *Research & Politics* 4.2 (2017).

Donna Murch. “Crack in Los Angeles: Crisis, Militarization, and Black Response to the Late Twentieth-Century War on Drugs,” *Journal of American History*, Vol. 102, June 2015, 162–173.

Monday, October 22: Mexico’s Drug War

Response Paper 1 Due

Viridiana Rios, “How Government Coordination Controlled Organized Crime: The Case of Mexico’s Cocaine Markets.” *Journal Of Conflict Resolution* 59.8 (2015): 1433-1454.

Richard Snyder and Angelica Duran-Martinez. “Does Illegality Breed Violence? Drug Trafficking and State-Sponsored Protection Rackets.” *Crime, Law And Social Change* 52.3 (2009): 253-273.

Wednesday, October 24: Drug Violence in Latin America

Excerpt from Oscar Martinez, *A History of Violence: Living and Dying in Central America*. (Verso: 2016).

Friday, October 26: The Visibility of Violence & Measuring Violence

Angelica Duran-Martinez. “Silent Traffickers or Brutal Criminals: How State Power Shapes Criminal’s Incentives to Expose Violence,” in *Violence and Crime in Latin America: Representations and Politics*, Oklahoma University Press: (2017).

Enrique Desmond Arias and Kayyonne Marston. “Selective. Blindness. Criminal Visibility and Violence in Rio de Janeiro and Kingston.” in *Violence and Crime in Latin America: Representations and Politics*. Oklahoma University Press: (2017).

Monday, October 29: US Policy Responses: Merida, CARSI, etc.

Alexander Main. "The U.S. Re-militarization of Central America and Mexico." *NACLA*, 2014.

Jesse Franzblau, "Why Is the US Still Spending Billions to Fund Mexico's Corrupt Drug War?" *The Nation*, February 27, 2015.

Clare Ribando Seelke and Kristin Finklea. "US-Mexican Security Cooperation: The Mérida Initiative and Beyond." *Congressional Research Service*, January 18, 2017.

Wednesday, October 31: Spillover Violence & The Border

Guadalupe Correa-Cabrera. "Security, Migration, and the Economy in the Texas-Tamaulipas Border Region: The 'Real' Effects of Mexico's Drug War." *Politics & Policy* 41.1 (2013): 65-82.

Esteban Flores, "Two Countries and One Headless Body: An Analysis of Border Corruption." *Harvard International Review*, August 2017.

Peter Andreas. "Gangster's Paradise: The Untold History of the United States and International Crime." *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (March/April 2013).

Friday, November 2: Guns & Transnational Gangs

Arindrajit Dube, Oeindrila Dube, & Omar García-Ponce. (2013). "Cross-Border Spillover: U.S. Gun Laws And Violence In Mexico." *American Political Science Review*, 107(3), 397-417.

Ana Arana. "How The Street Gangs Took Central America." *Foreign Affairs* (2005): 98-110.

Monday, November 5: Guest Speaker - David Holiday (Open Society Foundations Regional Manager for Central America)

Reading TBD

Wednesday, November 7: The Political Consequences of Criminal Violence

Regina Bateson. "Crime Victimization and Political Participation." *American Political Science Review* 106.3 (2012): 570-587.

Alejandro Trelles and Miguel Carreras. "Bullets and Votes: Violence and Electoral Participation in Mexico." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 4.2 (2012): 89-123.

Laura Blume. "The Old Rules No Longer Apply: Explaining Narco-Assassinations of Mexican Politicians." *Journal of Politics in Latin America* 9.1 (2017), 59 – 80.

Friday, November 9: Environmental Consequences and Narco-Deforestation

(Guest Lecturer: Laura Sauls)

Kendra McSweeney, et al. “Drug Policy As Conservation Policy: Narco-Deforestation.” *Science* (2014): 489-490.

Steven E. Sesnie, et al. “A Spatio-Temporal Analysis of Forest Loss Related to Cocaine Trafficking in Central America.” *Environmental Research Letters* 12.5 (2017).

Saul Elbein, “From Cocaine Cowboys to Narco-Ranchers,” *Foreign Policy*, July 8, 2016.

Monday, November 12: Consequences of Militarization in Honduras

Joseph Nevins, “How US Policy In Honduras Set The Stage For Today’s Mass Migration.” *The Conversation*, October 31, 2016.

Lee Fang and Danielle Mackey. “The President Of Honduras Is Deploying U.S.-Trained Forces Against Election Protesters.” *The Intercept*, December 3 2017.

Mattathias Schwartz, “DEA Lied To Congress About Deadly Raid That Killed Four Hondurans, Government Report Says.” *The Intercept*, May 24 2017.

Wednesday, November 14: Vigilantes & Paramilitaries

Héctor Abad, “Colombia’s Warning for Mexico,” *The New York Times*, February 13, 2014.

Brian J. Phillips, (2017). “Inequality and the Emergence of Vigilante Organizations: The Case of Mexican Autodefensas.” *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol 50, Issue 10, pp. 1358 – 1389.

Friday, November 16: Economics of Drug Trafficking & Criminal Violence

Viridiana Ríos. “To Be Or Not To Be A Drug Trafficker: Modeling Criminal Occupational Choices.” *Unpublished paper presented at the Midwest Political Science Association*, 2010.

Rodrigo R. Soares and Joana Naritomi. “Understanding High Crime Rates In Latin America: The Role Of Social And Policy Factors.” *The Economics Of Crime: Lessons For And From Latin America*. University of Chicago Press, 2010. 19-55.

Monday, November 19: Drug War Capitalism

Response Paper 2 Due

Dawn Paley, “Drug War as Neoliberal Trojan Horse.” *Latin American Perspectives* 42, no. 5 (2015): 109-132.

Thanksgiving Break

Monday, November 26: The Opioid Crisis

Excerpts from: Sam Quinones, *Dreamland: The True Tale of America’s Opiate Epidemic*. (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2015).

Wednesday, November 28: The Opioid Crisis (Part 2)

Mars, Sarah G., et al. "“Every ‘Never’ I ever said came true”: Transitions from opioid pills to heroin injecting." *International Journal of Drug Policy* 25.2 (2014): 257-266.

Julie Netherland and Helena B. Hansen. “The War on Drugs That Wasn’t: Wasted Whiteness, ‘Dirty Doctors,’ and Race in Media Coverage of Prescription Opioid Misuse.” *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 40.4 (2016): 664-686.

Friday, November 30: Changing Marijuana Laws

Courtenay W. Daum, “Low, Slow, and in Control: Colorado’s Experiment with Legalized Recreational Marijuana.” In *Where There’s Smoke: The Environmental Science, Public Policy, and Politics of Marijuana*, ed. Char Miller. University Press of Kansas. (2018). 139 – 158.

Monday, December 3: Changing Marijuana Laws (Part 2)

Bryce Pardo. “Cannabis Policy Reforms in the Americas: A Comparative Analysis of Colorado, Washington, and Uruguay.” *International Journal of Drug Policy* 25.4 (2014): 727-735.

Alfonso Serrano, “Inside Big Pharma's Fight To Block Recreational Marijuana.” *The Guardian*, October 22, 2016.

Kendall Bentsen, “Money, Not Morals, Drives Marijuana Prohibition Movement.” *OpenSecrets.Org*, August 5, 2014.

Wednesday, December 5: Alternatives to Prohibition

José Miguel Cruz, Rosario Queirolo, and María Fernanda Boidi. “Determinants of Public Support for Marijuana Legalization in Uruguay, the United States, and El Salvador.” *Journal of Drug Issues* 46.4 (2016): 308-325.

The Drug Policy Alliance. “Why is Marijuana Decriminalization Not Enough?” February 14, 2018.

Friday, December 7: Alternatives to Prohibition (Part 2)

Nicholas Kristof. “How to Win a War on Drugs.” *The New York Times*, September 22, 2017.

Caitlin Elizabeth Hughes, Alex Stevens. “What Can We Learn From The Portuguese Decriminalization of Illicit Drugs?” *The British Journal of Criminology*, Volume 50, Issue 6, 1 November 2010, Pages 999–1022.

Monday, December 10: Wrapping Up

Wednesday, December 12: Final Exam Review

Monday, December 17: FINAL EXAM from 12:30pm – 2:30pm