

**History 397, Section 004  
War on Crime/War on Drugs**

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Fall 2010  
Tues. 4:00-7:00 p.m.  
Mason Hall G463

**Office Hours:** Thurs. 2:00-4:00 p.m. and by appt.

**Course Webpage:** CTools: History 397 004 2010 [<https://ctools.umich.edu/portal>]

This upper-level history colloquium examines the causes and consequences of the various wars on crime and illegal drugs declared by federal and state governments in the United States, from the prohibition of alcohol and the “reefer madness” scare of the 1920s/1930s through the contemporary era of mass incarceration through what critics label the American prison-industrial complex. The United States currently imprisons a higher percentage of its population than any other nation in the world; counting probation and parole, more than 7 million Americans live under the supervision of the criminal justice system. The 2008 National Drug Survey revealed that 20 million Americans regularly consume illegal drugs, with marijuana representing 75 percent of this total and teenagers more likely than adults to be illicit drug users (not counting underage drinking). About 500,000 people are currently in U.S. jails and prisons for nonviolent drug offenses, and two-thirds of this incarcerated population is African American or Latino.

The colloquium will revolve around critical reading and seminar-style discussion of books and articles covering a wide range of topics related to the politics and public policies of crime and drugs. We will explore the long struggle over whether to classify illegal drug use as a public health or law enforcement issue, from the FBI’s early war on marijuana and heroin users, to the drug legalization movement that gained steam in the 1960s and 1970s, to the “Just Say No” formula of the Reagan administration. Readings will cover topics such as the national panic over juvenile delinquency by urban and suburban youth in the 1940s and 1950s, the politics of “law and order” in the 1960s and 1970s, and the ways in which the “war on drugs” and the mass media have shaped episodes such as the crack cocaine epidemic and anti-gang policing crackdown that escalated in the 1980s. The class also will address other features of drugs and crime in American law, politics, and popular culture such as the anxieties about child kidnappers and sex molesters that led to the “Three Strikes” policy in California and other states; the shift away from rehabilitative notions of delinquency and toward charging teenage law-breakers as adult criminals; the pervasive racial inequalities in policing and the criminal justice system; and the impact of popular culture representations in Hollywood films and on television. Finally, the class will investigate the international implications of America’s War on Drugs, as interdiction and crop eradication efforts have deeply involved the Drug Enforcement Agency and U.S. military in the internal affairs of Mexico, Afghanistan, and many other countries in Asia and Latin America. In addition to class discussion, the primary writing assignment for this course will be an original research paper of 25-30 pages. Students will give individual presentations and receive group feedback for these research projects during designated class meetings throughout the semester.

**Capstone Course:** The 396/397-level seminars function as the capstone courses for history concentrators and are designed to be intensive courses that explore scholarly debates in the secondary literature (historiography) and introduce undergraduates to the methods of interpreting and writing history from primary source material, in dialogue with the arguments of other scholars (as well as public policy experts and journalists, in our case). This course resembles a graduate-level seminar more than a typical undergraduate lecture course, and the assignments emphasize the methods of academic history: debating and critiquing secondary sources, evaluating primary source evidence, being prepared to critique the underlying assumptions of historical actors and scholars alike, conducting your own archival and database research, and providing peer feedback for the research projects of your classmates.

**Requirements:** Attendance at our once-a-week class meetings is **mandatory**. If you must miss a meeting for a medical reason or religious holiday or another justifiable reason, then you should alert the professor in advance. You also will be required to submit a two-page, single-spaced summary of the reading/film assignment (in addition to any other written assignment due that week). Students are expected to complete all assigned readings, and watch any assigned videos, in advance of the class meeting and come prepared to participate actively in discussion.

**Films:** We will watch three films/television shows outside of regularly scheduled class meetings. Week 4 also includes an online viewing assignment on your own time, and occasionally we will watch parts of documentaries during class. The three major viewing assignments (*G-Men*, *Dirty Harry*, and two episodes of *The Wire*) will be on reserve at Askwith Media Library on the second floor of the Undergraduate Library. Students are encouraged to attend the group screening, which will be held on Sundays before the relevant class meetings (9-12, 10-10, 11-7), time and location TBA.

**Discussion Projects:** On five occasions during the semester, the discussion assignment will include a short project to be completed before class. These include database research to find primary source examples of media coverage of crime/drugs (Weeks 2, 4, 6, 8), which will serve as one way to think about the relationship between primary documents and secondary sources. Before the class meeting, students should post a primary document as an attachment on CTools in the **Discussion Thread** for these weeks, along with a brief explanation of its significance. The other discussion project (Week 3) will be a historiographical essay to be submitted in class. Specific guidelines for these Discussion Projects can be found in the Discussion Projects folder of the Resources section on CTools, designated [DP] in the syllabus.

**Research Paper:** The culmination of this colloquium is a 25-30 page original research paper, to be based in primary sources (archival as well as digital) and in dialogue with other scholars. Students will be divided into two groups (A and B) and will present their research in progress at various stages throughout the semester. In general, we will use the second half of certain class periods for these individual presentations; the final two class meetings will be dedicated to group feedback on rough drafts. Students will post these drafts on CTools in the Assignments folder, and individual members of Group A will be designated to provide the lead commentary on papers written by members of Group B, and vice versa. The overall guidelines for the research paper, as well as specific guidelines for each stage of the process, will be posted on CTools in the Resources/Research Paper folder, designated [RP] in the syllabus.

| <b>Research Paper Timetable:</b>  | Group A         | Group B        |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Individual Meeting with Professor | Sept. 24 (Fri.) | Oct. 1 (Fri.)  |
| Topic Presentations               | Sept. 28 (Wk 4) | Oct. 5 (Wk 5)  |
| Primary/Secondary Bibliography    | Oct. 20 (Wk 7)  | Oct. 20 (Wk 7) |
| Historiographical Presentation    | Nov. 2 (Wk 9)   | Nov. 9 (Wk 10) |
| Historiographical Essay/Outline   | Nov. 5 (Fri.)   | Nov. 12 (Fri.) |
| Optional Meeting with Professor   | Nov. 12 (Fri.)  | Nov. 12 (Fri.) |
| Rough Draft Posted on CTools      | Nov. 27 (Sat.)  | Dec. 4 (Sat.)  |
| Rough Draft Presentations         | Nov. 30 (Wk 13) | Dec. 7 (Wk 14) |
| Final Paper Due                   | Dec. 17 (Fri.)  | Dec. 17 (Fri.) |

**Style Guide:** The History 397 Style Guide is available on CTools in the Resources Folder. These guidelines should be followed for the research paper and other written assignments, and they also explain issues such as the documentation of sources and the penalties for plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty.

**Grade Breakdown:**

- \*Discussion (50%): active and consistent participation, discussion projects, peer feedback
- \*Research Paper (50%): including in-class presentations and preliminary deadlines

**Readings:**

**1. Electronic Reader [ER]:** A selection of articles, book chapters, magazine articles, and primary documents is available on CTools in the Resources/Electronic Reader section. These assignments are denoted as [ER] in the syllabus. Some are pdf files, and others are hyperlinks to primary documents available on the web.

**2. Required Books:** The following books are available for purchase online and at area bookstores that participate in the U-M textbook system (Ulrich's, Michigan Book and Supply, Michigan Union). One copy of each is on reserve at Shapiro Undergraduate Library.

Claire Bond Potter, *War on Crime: Bandits, G-Men, and the Politics of Mass Culture*

Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*

Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City*

Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*

Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure*

David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*

Sasha Abramsky, *American Furies: Crime, Punishment, and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment*

## Course Outline

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### Abbreviations in Course Outline:

ER = Electronic Reader Folder [History 397 004 2010 Resources/Electronic Reader]

DP = Discussion Projects Folder [History 397 004 2010 Resources/Discussion Projects]

RP = Research Paper Folder [History 397 004 2010 Resources/Research Paper]

### Week 1 (Sept. 7)—Introduction

\*Glenn C. Loury, “Why Are So Many Americans in Prison?” *Boston Review* (March/April 2007) [ER]

\*Marc Mauer and Ryan S. King, “A 25-Year Quagmire: The War on Drugs and Its Impact on American Society” (The Sentencing Project, Sept. 2007) [ER]

\*Heather Mac Donald, “The War on the Police,” *Weekly Standard* (Dec. 31, 2001) [ER]

\*“War Without Borders” Series, *New York Times* (2009) [ER]

\*William Finnegan, “Sheriff Joe,” *The New Yorker* (July 20, 2009) [ER]

\*Jon Lee Anderson, “The Taliban’s Opium War,” *The New Yorker* (July 9, 2007) [ER]

\*Sasha Abramsky, “Is This the End of the War on Crime?” *The Nation* (July 5, 2010) [ER]

### Week 2 (Sept. 14)—Nationalizing the War on Crime

\*Claire Bond Potter, *War on Crime: Bandits, G-Men, and the Politics of Mass Culture*

\*Discussion Project #1: Research Coverage of Bandits/Gangsters [DP]

\*Film #1: *G-Men* (1935), dir. William Keighley, 85 min. (screening Sept. 12)

### Week 3 (Sept. 21)—Juvenile Delinquency and Social Control

\*Janis Appier, “‘We’re Blocking Youth’s Path to Crime’: The Los Angeles Coordinating Councils during the Great Depression,” *Journal of Urban History* (Jan. 2005), 190-218 [ER]

\*Elizabeth R. Escobedo, “The Pachuca Panic: Sexual and Cultural Battlegrounds in

World War II Los Angeles,” *Western Historical Quarterly* (Summer 2007), 133-156 [ER]

\*James Gilbert, “Rehearsal for a Crime Wave” (24-41) and “The Great Fear” (63-78), in *A Cycle of Outrage: America’s Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s* [ER]

\*Victoria Wolcott, “Recreation and Race in the Postwar City: Buffalo’s 1956 Crystal Beach Riot,” *Journal of American History* (June 2006), 63-90 [ER]

\*Primary Source Documents: Harry J. Anslinger, “Marijuana: Assassin of Youth,” *American Magazine* (July 1937) [ER]

\*J. Edgar Hoover, “A ‘Third Front’: Against Juvenile Crime,” *New York Times Magazine* (Feb. 27, 1944) [ER]

\*Discussion Project #2: Historiographical Review Essay (due in class) [DP]

**\*\*Group A (Friday, Sept. 24):** Schedule individual meetings with professor

#### **Week 4 (Sept. 28)—Sex Crimes and Child Victims**

\*Philip Jenkins, *Moral Panic: Changing Concepts of the Child Molester in Modern America*

\*Jeffrey Toobin, “The Man Who Kept Going Free,” *New Yorker* (March 7, 1994) [ER]

\*Discussion Project #3: Watch an episode of *America’s Most Wanted* or a similar TV series [DP]

\***Group A:** Topic Presentations (in class) [RP]

**\*\*Group B (Friday, Oct. 1):** Schedule individual meetings with professor

#### **Week 5 (Oct. 5)—Drug Markets and the Urban Crisis**

\*Eric Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City*

\*Douglas Clark Kinder, “Bureaucratic Cold Warrior: Harry J. Anslinger and Illicit Narcotics Traffic,” *Pacific Historical Review* (May 1981), 169-191 [ER]

\*Primary Source Documents: Pamela Colloff, “Teenage Wasteland,” *Texas Monthly* (Jan. 1999) [ER]

\***Group B:** Topic Presentations (in class) [RP]

### **Week 6 (Oct. 12)—Crime Politics in the Civil Rights Era**

\*Michael Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil Unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*

\*Primary Source Documents: “The Crime Wave,” *Time* (June 30, 1975) [ER]

\*“The Youth Crime Plague,” *Time* (July 11, 1977) [ER]

\*Discussion Project #4: Research Coverage of “Law and Order” Politics [DP]

\*Film #2: *Dirty Harry* (1971), dir. Don Siegel, 102 min. (screening Oct. 10)

### **Week 7 (Oct. 19)—No class (Fall Break)**

**\*\*Groups A and B:** Submit Bibliography of Primary and Secondary Sources by Wed., Oct. 20 [RP]

### **Week 8 (Oct. 26)—War on Drugs: Politics and Public Policy**

\*Dan Baum, *Smoke and Mirrors: The War on Drugs and the Politics of Failure*

\*Primary Source Documents: National Commission on Marihuana and Drug Abuse, “Marihuana: A Signal of Misunderstanding” excerpt (1972) [ER]

\*Marsha Manatt, “Parents, Peers, and Pot” excerpt (1979) [ER]

\*Discussion Project #5: Research Coverage of Crack Cocaine [DP]

### **Week 9 (Nov. 2)—Debating Zero Tolerance**

\*George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson, “Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety,” *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982) [ER]

\*John DiIulio, “The Coming of the Super-Predators,” *Weekly Standard* (Nov. 27, 1995) [ER]

\*John DiIulio, “My Black Crime Problem, and Ours,” *City Journal* (Spring 1996) [ER]

\*Ira Glasser and Loren Siegel, “‘When Constitutional Rights Seem Too Extravagant to Endure’: The Crack Scare’s Impact on Civil Rights and Liberties,” in *Crack in America: Demon Drugs and Social Justice*, 229-248 [ER]

\**National Review* Forum, “The War on Drugs Is Lost” (July 1, 1996) [ER]  
[Week 9 continued]

\*Jeffrey Rosen, “Excessive Force,” *The New Republic* (April 10, 2000) [ER]

\*Neil Smith, “Giuliani Time: The Revanchist 1990s,” *Social Text* (Winter 1998), 1-20 [ER]

**\*\*Group A:** Historiographical Presentations (in class) [RP]

\*Submit historiographical essay and research paper outline/introduction by Friday, Nov. 5 [RP]

### **Week 10 (Nov. 9)—War on Drugs: The View from the Street**

\*David Simon and Edward Burns, *The Corner: A Year in the Life of an Inner-City Neighborhood*

\*Film #3: Episodes of *The Wire* (2004), created by David Simon (screening Nov. 7)

**\*\*Group B:** Historiographical Presentations (in class) [RP]

\*Submit historiographical essay and research paper outline/introduction by Friday, Nov. 12 [RP]

**\*Group A and B** (Friday, Nov. 12): Schedule progress report meetings with professor (optional)

### **Week 11 (Nov. 16)—Mass Incarceration**

\*Sasha Abramsky, *American Furies: Crime, Punishment, and Vengeance in the Age of Mass Imprisonment*

\*Eric Schlosser, “The Prison-Industrial Complex,” *The Atlantic* (Dec. 1998) [ER]

\*Heather Ann Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline, and Transformation in Postwar American History,” *Journal of American History* (forthcoming) [ER]

### **Week 12 (Nov. 23)—Narco-Diplomacy: Drug War as Foreign Policy**

\*Readings: TBA

### **Week 13 (Nov. 30)—Presentations of Research Paper Rough Drafts I**

**\*Group A:** Post drafts on CTools by Nov. 27 [RP]

**Week 14 (Dec. 7)—Presentations of Research Paper Rough Drafts II**

**\*Group B:** Post drafts on CTools by Dec. 4 [RP]

**Groups A and B:** Final Papers Due Dec. 17