EVIDENCE-BASED CRIME POLICY (CRIM 7262)
Spring 2015

Professor Brandon C. Welsh, Ph.D.
Northeastern University
School of Criminology and Criminal Justice
Churchill Hall 401B
Phone: (617) 373-8078; Email: b.welsh@neu.edu
Office Hours: Thursday 4:30-5:30 p.m. (or by appointment)

Lecture Room: Churchill Hall 200

Lecture Time: Thursday 5:45-8:15 p.m.

Course Description: The evidence-based paradigm aims to place systematic research at center stage in the policy-making process to make crime policy more effective, fair, and efficient. It uses the most scientifically valid evaluation studies and the most rigorous review methods to identify, collect, and analyze the most up-to-date scientific evidence. This course is designed to train students in the theory and methods of the evidence-based paradigm and further develop their skills in critically assessing leading research findings and policy initiatives in the field. Students will apply this knowledge by conducting a systematic review on the effects of criminological interventions on crime and related outcomes.

Key Objectives:
1. To introduce students to the evidence-based paradigm and its relevance to crime policy.
2. To further develop students’ skills to critically assess experimental and non-experimental research findings.
3. To provide students with the skills to conduct a systematic review on the effects of criminological interventions.
4. To further develop students’ writing and presentation skills.

Required Readings: Students are responsible for reading the required works prior to class. There are three books and a number of journal articles. All of the articles are available through the library’s e-journals service. The books can be purchased at Northeastern University’s bookstore. The books are as follows:

**Grading Policy:** The course grade will be based on two written assignments and a presentation.

1. **Review protocol.** This assignment is worth 20% of the course grade and is due on February 12. Each student will prepare a review protocol. The protocol is to be no more than 10 (or no less than 8) double-spaced pages, exclusive of title page and bibliography. A review protocol is a report that sets out the reviewers’ intentions with regard to the topic to be investigated and the methods to be used in carrying out a systematic review. The protocol is to be written as a research paper and must contain the following: background for the review; objectives of the review; and methods. (A handout will be provided.)

2. **Presentation.** The presentation is worth 30% of the course grade. Presentations will take place in class on March 26, April 2, and April 9. Each student will present the results of their systematic review. Presentations will be judged on understanding of the intervention topic, coverage of the substantive elements of the systematic review, presentation style (i.e., clarity, use of visual aids and handouts), and responses to questions. More details will be given in class. **Note:** Students who are not presenting are expected to attend each presentation. Points will be awarded for attendance and participation.

3. **Systematic review.** This assignment is worth 40% of the course grade and is due on April 23. Each student will prepare a systematic review on the effects of a criminal justice or criminological intervention on crime or related outcomes. The systematic review is to be no more than 20 (or no less than 16) double-spaced pages, exclusive of title page and bibliography. “Systematic literature reviews are a method of making sense of large bodies of information, and a means of contributing to the answers to questions about what works and what does not…” (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006, p. 2). The systematic review is to be written as a research paper and must contain the following: background for the review; objectives of the review; methods; details of the included studies; results; discussion; and conclusions. (A handout will be provided.)

The review protocol and systematic review assignments will be graded according to the following: adherence to specified guidelines; use of the required and other scholarly readings; and organization and writing skills.

**Attendance and Participation:** Students are expected to attend each class and come prepared to engage in discussion of the required readings/course content. Attendance and participation will count for 10% of the course grade.

**Lectures and Required Readings:**

**January 15:** Course Introduction and Overview

**January 22:** Evidence-Based Crime Prevention

Petticrew & Roberts (2006). Chapter 1 (pp. 1-26).


**January 29:** Evaluation Research


Farrington, D. P., & Welsh, B. C. (2013). Randomized experiments in criminology: What has been learned from long-term follow-ups? (pp. 111-140). In Welsh et al.


**February 5:** Assessing Research Evidence


**February 12:** The Systematic Review: A Focus on What Works

**Note:** The review protocol is due at the beginning of class.


**February 19:** Starting the Systematic Review


Petticrew & Roberts (2006). Chapter 3 (pp. 57-78).

**February 26:** Searching for Studies


**March 5:** Analyzing Results


**Note:** There is no class on March 12; it is Spring break.
March 19: Exploring Heterogeneity and Publication Bias


Braga, A. A. (2013). Quasi-experimentation when random assignment is not possible: Observations from practical experiences in the field (pp. 223-250). In Welsh et al.


March 26: Presentations

April 2: Presentations

April 9: Presentations

April 16: The Future of Evidence-Based Crime Policy: Part I


April 23: The Future of Evidence-Based Crime Policy: Part II

Note: The systematic review is due at the beginning of class.


Other Course Policies:

The highest standards of academic integrity are expected in this course. All students should remind themselves of Northeastern University’s Academic Honesty and Integrity policy, which can be found in the Student Handbook. Any instances of cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, or other academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with the University’s official policies (also described in the Student Handbook). Copying from a source that seems to have no author (as is the case with Wikipedia materials) is as much an offense as copying from a source with a clear author.

Please bring to my attention as early as possible any special educational needs you may have. The University’s Disability Resource Center provides services to students needing special accommodations (see http://www.accessdisability-deaf.neu.edu/).