

47:202:420: Drug Policy

Fall 2025

COURSE INFORMATION

Instructor Information:

Instructor: Professor Valerio Baćak, PhD

Email: valerio.bacak@rutgers.edu

Meeting Times: The course is taught online and asynchronously on Canvas.

Office Hours: Wednesdays 4:00-5:00pm on Zoom (link is below)

<https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/95109945143?pwd=LMmPU7IriiMbY1h3rIvae26jYtqj54.1> (pass: 350323)

How to ask Questions?

When you have comments, concerns, or questions about the course, Canvas, assignments, or anything else related to the course, first write your question on the discussion forum. This way other students can see the answer from the instructor, or they can help you find the answer. It is also an opportunity to engage in discussion with your peers.

Our Commitment as Partners in Learning:

Everyone can thrive in this course. As a first-generation student, I know what it feels like to navigate the complex world of academia. I will do all I can to create a supportive and welcoming learning environment for all. Over the years, I've learned that students learn best when they are curious about and respect perspectives and experiences different from their own. For that reason, in this course we will support each other regardless of our differences in terms of race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or national origin.

Course Overview:

This course examines how drug policies are formed, how they change over time, and how they travel across the world. You will engage with innovative research on the prevalence and nature of both legal and illegal drug use, the effects of drug trade on political instability, and how drug policies create and sustain inequality. We will also discuss relative merits and the evidence base for public health approaches to drug policy on the one hand, and punitive approaches on the other. Course topics may include prohibition of alcohol in the early 20th century, the effects of cannabis legalization, and the contemporary opioid epidemic. The course perspective will be decidedly comparative and global.

Credits: 3

Prerequisites: None.

B.S., Criminal Justice Program Learning Goals: Upon completion of the B.S. in Criminal Justice at Rutgers University-Newark, students should be able to:

1. Describe the development and functions of major criminal justice institutions (e.g., police, courts, corrections, and juvenile justice), the activities of actors within these institutions, and how they relate to one another as well as the broader social, political, and economic world.
2. Describe the mechanisms, correlates, theoretical underpinnings, and situational contexts of crime, criminal behavior and opportunity, and techniques for prevention and treatment.
3. Apply and analyze theories related to the policies and practices of the criminal justice system and its major institutions.
4. Demonstrate the ability to gather, explain, and apply empirical research in the field of criminal justice.
5. Obtain a comprehensive knowledge about the process of conducting criminal justice research, and develop the skills to conduct criminal justice research with appropriate methodologies.

Course Learning Objectives:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical and political emergence of drug control policies in the United States and globally.
2. Identify the main characteristics of dominant drug control policies, and how effective they are in reducing drug use and illegal drug trade.
3. Explain how punitive approaches to drug use are different from public health approaches that focus on harm reduction and decriminalization.
4. Articulate the role of dominant drug control policies in creating and sustaining racial inequality, with a particular focus on the criminal justice system.

Required Readings:

All required readings will be available to download on Canvas. The required readings are listed under the weekly course schedule. There will be additional required course materials, such as newspaper articles and videos, that will also be posted on Canvas. There will be no textbook for the course.

Course Structure:

The course will be taught online and asynchronously. All course materials will be posted on Canvas on a weekly basis as modules. The modules will be made available by noon on Monday of each week.

Lectures will be pre-recorded and posted on Canvas. The course will also include guest lectures and guests talking about their research with the instructor. These conversations will be pre-recorded and made available asynchronously.

Course Schedule and Academic Readings (subject to change; additional materials on Canvas)

Module*	Class Topic	Readings
Sep 2	Course	<i>Introduction to the course. No readings required.</i>

	introduction	
Sep 8	Drugs, colonialism, and empires	McCoy, A. (1972). “The colonial legacy: Opium for the natives”, <i>Politics of Heroin in Southeast Asia</i> . Harper Colophon Books, pp. 55-80.
Sep 15	Geopolitics of drug control	Gootenberg, P. (2012). Cocaine’s long march north, 1900–2010. <i>Latin American Politics and Society</i> , 54(1), 159-180.
Sep 22	Evidence in drug policy research	Reuter, P., Caulkins, J. P., & Midgette, G. (2021). Heroin use cannot be measured adequately with a general population survey. <i>Addiction</i> , 116(10), 2600-2609. Becker, H. S. (1953). Becoming a marihuana user. <i>American Journal of Sociology</i> , 59(3), 235-242.
Sep 29		DOCUMENTARY SCREENING
Oct 6	Trends in legal and illegal drug use	Peacock, A., Leung, J., Larney, S., Colledge, S., Hickman, M., Rehm, J., ... & Degenhardt, L. (2018). Global statistics on alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use: 2017 status report. <i>Addiction</i> , 113(10), 1905-1926. Degenhardt, L., & Hall, W. (2012). Extent of illicit drug use and dependence, and their contribution to the global burden of disease. <i>The Lancet</i> , 379(9810), 55-70. Kantor, E. D., Rehm, C. D., Haas, J. S., Chan, A. T., & Giovannucci, E. L. (2015). Trends in prescription drug use among adults in the United States from 1999-2012. <i>JAMA</i> , 314(17), 1818-1830.
Oct 13	Big pharma, pain, and the opioid crisis	Vadivelu, N., Kai, A. M., Kodumudi, V., Sramcik, J., & Kaye, A. D. (2018). The opioid crisis: a comprehensive overview. <i>Current Pain and Headache Reports</i> , 22(3), 1-6. Van Zee, A. (2009). The promotion and marketing of oxycontin: Commercial triumph, public health tragedy. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> , 99(2), 221-227. Dasgupta, N., Beletsky, L., & Ciccarone, D. (2018). Opioid crisis: No easy fix to its social and economic determinants. <i>American Journal of Public Health</i> , 108(2), 182-186.
Oct 20	International drug control	Global Commission on Drug Policy (2014). <i>Taking Control: Pathways to Drug Policies that Work</i> . Geneva, Switzerland. Csete, J., Kamarulzaman, A., Kazatchkine, M., Altice, F., Balicki, M., Buxton, J., ... & Beyrer, C. (2016). Public health and international drug policy. <i>The Lancet</i> , 387(10026), 1427-1480.
Oct 27	Cigarettes, alcohol, and public health	Proctor, R. N. (2012). The history of the discovery of the cigarette–lung cancer link: evidentiary traditions, corporate denial, global toll. <i>Tobacco Control</i> , 21(2), 87-91. Proctor, R. N. (2020). The cigarette: a political history—the past, present, and future of US tobacco. <i>JAMA</i> , 324(1), 10-11. Samet, J. M., & Wipfli, H. L. (2010). Globe still in grip of addiction. <i>Nature</i> , 463(7284), 1020-1021.
Nov 3	Cannabis	Caulkins, J. P. (2024). Changes in self-reported cannabis use in the

	legalization	United States from 1979 to 2022. <i>Addiction</i> . Hall, W., Stjepanović, D., Caulkins, J., Lynskey, M., Leung, J., Campbell, G., & Degenhardt, L. (2019). Public health implications of legalising the production and sale of cannabis for medicinal and recreational use. <i>Lancet</i> , 394(10208), 1580-1590. Bender, S. W. (2016). The colors of cannabis: Race and marijuana. <i>University of California Davis Law Review</i> , 50(2), 689-706.
Nov 10		GUEST SPEAKER
Nov 17	Policing drugs	Kerr, T., Small, W., & Wood, E. (2005). The public health and social impacts of drug market enforcement: A review of the evidence. <i>International Journal of Drug Policy</i> , 16(4), 210-220. Sarang, A., Rhodes, T., Sheon, N., & Page, K. (2010). Policing drug users in Russia: risk, fear, and structural violence. <i>Substance Use & Misuse</i> , 45(6), 813-864.
Nov 24		NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK
Dec 1	Drug courts	Belenko, S. (2019). The role of drug courts in promoting desistance and recovery: A merging of therapy and accountability. <i>Addiction Research & Theory</i> , 27(1), 3-15. Mitchell, O., Wilson, D. B., Eggers, A., & MacKenzie, D. L. (2012). Assessing the effectiveness of drug courts on recidivism: A meta-analytic review of traditional and non-traditional drug courts. <i>Journal of Criminal Justice</i> , 40(1), 60-71.
Dec 8		GUEST SPEAKER

* the date refers to the day when the module will be released.

Course Assessment and Grading:

The final grade in the course will be assessed based upon your performance on weekly quizzes. You are expected to do the readings and watch lectures and videos regularly—on a weekly basis. Some of the quizzes may include short writing assignments.

The quizzes will have to be completed by Monday noon the week after the module was released. That means you have a week to complete the quiz.

The following grading scale will be used for this course:

A	4.0	90-100%	Outstanding
B+	3.5	87-89%	
B	3.0	80-86%	Good
C+	2.5	77-79%	
C	2.0	70-76%	Satisfactory
D	1.0	60-69%	Poor
F	0.0	<60%	Failure

Late or Missing Assignment Policy:

Late assignments will not be accepted unless you have given prior notification and approval has been granted by the instructor. You can notify the instructor, that you will be late with the assignment or quiz by sending them an email or a Canvas message.

You can miss one quiz without asking for approval—this quiz will not be counted toward your grade.

COURSE POLICIES

Language Statement

The Rutgers University School of Criminal Justice (SCJ) encourages students, faculty, and staff to use *person-first* and *humanizing* language in their verbal and written communications. Being mindful of the ways in which we describe people impacted by our criminal legal systems is an important step in restoring their dignity and humanity. This evolution of language is an important piece of broader systemic shifts that are needed to make our justice systems more equitable. We encourage *replacing* labels that refer to people as “offender,” “inmate,” “parolee” or related terms with more neutral descriptors such as “person convicted of a crime,” “incarcerated person,” and “person under parole supervision.” Additional details about why this is important can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

Academic Integrity

As a member of the Rutgers University community you are not to engage in any academic dishonesty. You are responsible for adhering to basic academic standards of honesty and integrity as outlined in the Rutgers University Policy on Academic Integrity for Undergraduate and Graduate Students <http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity>

Your academic work should be the result of your own individual effort, you should not allow other students to use your work, and you are required to recognize and reference any material that is not your own. Violations of the university’s policy will result in appropriate action.

Academic Resources and Support

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Help with Technology. You can find resources and help to prepare yourself for technological aspects of taking an online course here: <https://runit.rutgers.edu/technology-launch-pad/>.

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals Experiencing Disability: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) works with students with medical, physical, and/or mental conditions who encounter disabling barriers in order to determine reasonable and appropriate accommodations for access. Students who have completed the

process with ODS and have approved accommodations are provided a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) specific to each course. To initiate accommodations for their course students must both provide the LOA to and have a conversation with the course instructor about the accommodations. This should occur as early in the semester as possible. More information can be found at the [RU-N ODS website \(ods.newark.rutgers.edu\)](https://ods.newark.rutgers.edu). Contact ODS at (973) 353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-5063 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Short-term Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) Students requesting a letter of verification should submit information using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/Verification>.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm>.

For support related to Interpersonal Violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance (VPVA) can provide any student with confidential support. The office does **not** have a reporting obligation to Title IX. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based helpline available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support. Students do not need to be a victim/survivor of violence; any student can receive services, information and support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a plan of support plan and address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Connect with the CARE Team by using the following link: <https://go.rutgers.edu/RUNReportingForm> or emailing careteam@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Psychological Support (Stress, Mood, Family Issues, Substance Use concerns and other personal challenges): The Rutgers University-Newark Counseling Center provides individual therapy and support groups for students dealing with psychological issues. To schedule an appointment, email counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or call (973) 353-5805. Additional support is available through Uwill services:

- Uhelp: Crisis support at 833-646-1526 (available 24/7/365).
- Urise: Wellness-based video collection with a free account.
- Umatch: Teletherapy with flexible scheduling, starting with a free account.

Access Uwill@RUN at <https://my.rutgers.edu> using your netid. Services are confidential and free.

For emergencies, call 911 or Rutgers University Police Department at (973) 353-5111.

If you are interested in finding out more about

- Accelerated Master's Program (B.S. /M.A.)
- Criminal Justice National Honor Society (Alpha Phi Sigma)

Please refer to the School of Criminal Justice website <http://rscj.newark.rutgers.edu/>