

# Crime and Punishment in the U.S. and Sweden

Fall 2018

---

*Instructor:* Jonas Brodin  
*E-mail:* jonas.brodin@swedishprogram.org  
*Class hours:* Wednesday, 13.15–16.15  
*Office hours:* TBA

---

This course compares the Swedish and U.S. criminal justice systems from a historical, sociological, philosophical, and political perspective. Students will be asked to reflect on the larger philosophical and moral questions underlying the criminal justice systems. For example, how do cultural and political values and assumptions affect our definition of what justice is? We will also study how the criminal justice systems in both countries have developed historically. Crime will be examined from a sociological perspective, for example, by looking closer at the social forces that tend to lead to certain kinds of illegal behavior. Why do some countries have high crime rates while other do not? Lastly, we will examine the institutions and professions tied to both criminal justice systems, such as the role of correctional facilities and police officers.

**Google Classroom:** The Swedish Program uses the Google Classroom platform for all its courses. On the course Classroom page, you will find the readings, assignments, and lecture notes, as well as links to useful resources for further study. The course platform is also where you will submit your assignments. It also functions as a discussion forum outside of class: you are highly encouraged to participate in extending class discussions by posting questions and links throughout the semester. I will use the course platform to post links to articles and books that are relevant to the class, as well as reminders of deadlines and questions I have for you as a group outside of class.

**Readings:** The bulk of the readings for the course will be available to download through the course platform. There is also one required book, which we will read throughout the semester: William Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*

**Laptops in the classroom:** You are welcome to use a laptop to take notes during lecture. However, please refrain from using the internet while in class: it distracts you and those around you from the classroom discussion, and current research shows that focusing on several tasks at once negatively impacts learning.

**Grading:** Your grade will be calculated according to the following breakdown:

*Attendance and participation:* 15%

*Research project:* 85%

**Attendance and participation (15%):** Attendance is mandatory; you have to come to lecture to pass this course. One unexcused absence is permitted; any unexcused absence after that will lower your grade one step (e.g., from A to A-). Participation is also an essential component of this course. You are expected to participate in a number of ways: e.g., you can be involved in class discussions and ask questions during lecture, you can be active on the Google Classroom stream, and you can be engaged during in-class activities.

**Research project (85%):** All of the assignments outside of class time will be part of a semester-long joint research project. All research projects will be on a common theme, and at the end of the semester, all of the research projects handed in by the class will be collected in a single volume. The first day of class, we will decide together what the overall theme of the research projects will be, and you will then choose a topic within that theme for your group's research project. You will work together in a group with one or two other students. To help structure your research, you will have a research task each week. Some of these tasks are written assignments that you or your group will hand in (and that contribute to the overall grade of the research project), while others are tasks you should discuss within the group. Guidelines for all of the research tasks will be available on the course website. The written assignments are the following:

9/12: *Initial research questions (5%).* This is a 1–2-page report stating the questions that will guide your research, as well as a brief introduction to why you want to research this topic. The questions should define your topic and provide a road map for your research. This is a **joint** assignment: you will hand in one document for the group as a whole.

9/26: *Sources and resources (5%).* There are two parts to this assignment: 1) You will produce a tentative bibliography, with a one or two sentence summary for each of the major texts. 2) You will identify the resources you will rely on gather your data, as well as provide short descriptions about the type of evidence available through the different resources. This is an **individual** assignment: you will hand in one document for each member of the group.

10/10: *Research proposal (15%).* The research proposal is a brief (5–7 pages) statement describing your intended research project. It includes not only a more developed research question, but also a description of your methodology and expected findings. You will be given a detailed list of what to include, to help guide you when writing your prospectus. This is a **joint** assignment: you will hand in one document for the group as a whole.

10/24: *Revised research questions (5%).* The revised research questions are an updated version of the initial research questions. By now, you should have focused and sharpened

your questions, so that you can provide an overall question that gives a clear sense of the entire project, as well as smaller questions that gives a sense of the different parts of the project. In addition to the questions, you will also provide a short explanation of both how the project relates to existing knowledge on the topic and what the significance of your contribution is. This is a **joint** assignment: you will hand in one document for the group as a whole.

11/21: *Outline of findings (10%)*. At this point, you should have preliminary results for your project—enough to turn in a 1–2 page outline of your final product, focused on presenting your results to date. This is an **individual** assignment: you will hand in one document for each member of the group.

11/28: *Presentation (5%)*. On the last day of instruction, you will give a very short (5 minutes) presentation summarizing the topic and your findings.

12/5: *Final project (40%)*. Your final research report should be around 20 pages in length. I will give you a set of guidelines for structuring and formatting your paper, as well as an explanation of the criteria I will use to evaluate your final report. This is a **joint** assignment: you will hand in one document for the group as a whole.

**Course learning outcomes:** At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge about the specifics of and differences between the American and Swedish criminal justice systems
- Understand the role of criminal justice in generating and exacerbating social inequality
- Understand the research process, from initial idea to final research report
- Present their research clearly and cogently, and draw out the implications of that research in a small-group conversational setting
- Produce a long, rigorous, empirically based collaborative research paper

**Schedule:**

### **Part I: Theoretical foundations**

8/29 *Introduction to the course + What is justice?*

#### **Research task: Decide the theme**

9/5 *Why do we need law? Do laws work?*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, Introduction  
Plato, *Crito*  
Kropotkin, "Law and Authority"  
Lepore, "Battleground America"  
Goss, *Disarmed*, chapter 1  
Goldberg, "The Case for More Guns (and More Gun Control)"  
Fleegler et. al., "Firearm Legislation and Firearm-Related Fatalities"  
LaFraniere et. al., "A Drumbeat of Multiple Shootings"  
Beckett, "How the Gun Control Debate Ignores Black Lives"

**Research task: Find topics**

## **Part II: Crime**

9/12 *Defining & measuring crime*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapter 1  
Morrison, "What Is Crime?"  
Mitchell, "The Annihilation of Space by Law"  
Haque, "*Lawrence v. Texas* and the Limits of the Criminal Law"  
Fisher, "Measuring Rape Against Women"  
Bazon, "Should Prostitution Be a Crime?"  
Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*, chapter 7

**Research task: Initial research questions (written assignment)**

9/19 *Explaining criminality*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapters 2–4  
Snyder, "Arrest in the United States, 1980-2009"  
Martens, "Immigrants, Crime, and Criminal Justice in Sweden"  
Ferrell et. al., "Cultural Criminology: An Invitation"  
Sánchez-Jankowski, "Gangs and Social Change"  
Donohue, "Economic Models of Crime and Punishment"  
McCollister et. al., "The Cost of Crime to Society"  
Cohen, *The Costs of Crime and Justice*, chapter 1

**Research task: Identify key concepts**

9/26 *The organization of criminal justice*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapter 5  
Hagan, "The American Criminal Justice System: An Overview"  
Lappi-Seppälä & Tonry, "Crime, Criminal Justice, and  
Criminology in the Nordic Countries"  
von Hofer, "Summary: Crime and Punishment in Sweden"  
"Swedish Crime Statistics 2014"  
"The Clearance Rates in Sweden and in Other Countries"

**Research task: Sources and resources (written assignment)**

10/3 *The thin blue line*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapter 6–7  
Wilson & Kelling, "Broken Windows"  
Braga et. al., "Can Policing Disorder Reduce Crime?"  
Clear & Cadora, *Community Justice*, chapters 1–2  
"One Police Shift"  
Swaine & Laughland, "The County"  
Filkins, "Do Not Resist"  
Balko, "War Comes to Pulaski County, Indiana"

**Research task: Methodology**

10/10 *Policing black bodies*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapter 8  
Rothstein, *The Making of Ferguson*  
Desmond, "Forced Out"  
"Here's How Racial Bias Plays Out in Policing"  
Hannah-Jones, "A Letter from Black America"  
*Eliminating Racial Inequality in the Criminal Justice System*  
Toobin, "Rights and Wrongs"

**Research task: Research proposal (written assignment)**

10/17 *Disparity and discrimination in the criminal justice system*

Reading: "Discrimination in the Criminal Justice Process in Sweden"  
Roman, "Race, Justifiable Homicide, and Stand Your Ground"

Laws”

“Florida ‘Stand Your Ground Law’ Yields Shocking Outcomes”

Ehrenreich, “How America Turned Poverty into a Crime”

Bannon et. al., *Criminal Justice Debt*

Gambino, “Thrown in Jail for Being Poor”

Pinto, “The Bail Trap”

Stillman, “Taken”

**Research task: Formulate hypotheses**

### **Part III: Punishment**

10/24 *Why do we punish?*

Reading: Stuntz, *The Collapse of American Criminal Justice*, chapter 9

Demker, “Fear and Punishment in Sweden”

Subramanian & Shames, *Sentencing and Prison Practices in Germany and the Netherlands*

Camus, “Reflections on the Guillotine”

Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned”

**Research task: Revised research questions (written assignment)**

10/29 **Break: no class!**

– 11/9

11/14 *Life behind bars*

Reading: “Basic Facts About the Swedish Prison and Probation Service”

Lindström & Leijonram, “The Swedish Prison System”

Morris, “The Contemporary Prison: 1965–Present”

Subramanian et. al., *Incarceration’s Front Door*

Alford, “What If Everything Foucault Said about Prison Were Wrong?”

Garland, “The Problem of the Body in Modern State Punishment”

Kaiser and Stannow, “The Rape of American Prisoners”

Rhodes, “Supermax as a Technology of Punishment”

**Research task: Literature review**

11/21 *The consequences of mass incarceration*

Reading: Alexander, "The New Jim Crow"

Cohen, "When Heroin Hits the White Suburbs"

Cole, "Can Our Shameful Prisons Be Reformed?"

"Trends in U.S. Corrections"

"Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2017"

Foster & Hagan, "The Mass Incarceration of Parents in America"

Western, "Mass Imprisonment and Economic Inequality"

Weiman, "Barriers to Prisoners' Reentry into the Labor Market"

**Research task: Outline of findings (written assignment)**

11/28 *The carceral state: Punishment as social control*

Reading: Gopnik, "The Caging of America"

Simon, "Rise of the Carceral State"

Gottschalk, "The Long Reach of the Carceral State"

Weaver & Lerman, "Political Consequences of the Carceral State"

Beckett & Murakawa, "Mapping the Shadow Carceral State"

Western, "The Prison Boom and the Decline of American Citizenship"

Goldstein, "Inexcusable Absences"

Jafarian & Ananthakrishnan: Just Kids

**Research task: In-class presentation of final project**

12/5 **Exam week: Final project due!**