

Economics 448W  
Seminar in the Economics of Crime

Spring 2019  
Mr. Easton

This course is a seminar course in the economics of crime. Students will prepare a paper based on a set of topics available in class, or will choose their own topic in consultation with the instructor. Papers will be presented in class and will be discussed by fellow students. The exact dates will be decided depending upon the number of students giving papers. Normally there is no final exam. *Attendance, however, is required.* Students are assumed to have had Economics 201, 301 and 333.

No textbook is assigned however students looking for a text to help them with basic topics and references might look at Anthony M. Yezer, [Economics of Crime and Enforcement](https://www.routledge.com/Economics-of-Crime-and-Enforcement/Yezer/p/book/9780765637109) (Routledge: 2014) available for purchase at <https://www.routledge.com/Economics-of-Crime-and-Enforcement/Yezer/p/book/9780765637109>

Normal grading includes 30% for in class presentations and critiques, and 70% for the final paper.

Illustration of the topics that have been explored in will be discussed in the first lecture. Students are expected to spend the first two weeks reading and preparing for a topic that interests them. They will then discuss their topic with the instructor during the third week in a one on one meeting during the class hours. A sign-up sheet will be available during the second class.

### The Reach of Topics

Here are examples of topics for your term papers. Some are routine in terms of analysis. Some are more challenging, and some are downright exotic. They are presented to give you some idea of the range of issues you may feel free to tackle. They should not be seen as limiting your interests or ingenuity. If you have a better or more interesting idea, we can discuss it.

Does prohibition cause crime? Look at Canadian prohibition of alcohol in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.  
Should suicide be considered as homicide empirically?

Racial profiling or signal extraction?

Do prisons increase or decrease the propensity to commit future crime?

What is the amount of deterrence versus incapacitation?

When should fines be used instead of or together with imprisonment?

Does less crime mean more crime for vulnerable victims?

Did legalized abortion reduce the crime rate in Canada and the US?

What is the relationship between education and crime?

What is the relationship between welfare payments and crime?

What is the relationship between prohibitions and crime?

Does crime run in families? Is it learned behaviour or consistent opportunities?

Does capital punishment reduce murder and or other crimes?

Does gun control reduce or increased crime?

Why are more crimes committed by the young?

What fraction of the crime rate is due to demographic changes? How much of crime is due to higher rates of crime within the different demographics.

Pick a particular crime and study its path over time, across space and among countries.

Why has the crime rate increased and/or fallen in: Canada, US, UK, Australia, EU countries?

What explains the pattern of crime world wide? Why is property crime positively related to income internationally but inversely related to income within a country?

What is the division between deterrence and incapacitation effects from imprisonment?

What is the optimal level of enforcement?

Except for homicide, why has Europe a higher property and violent crime rate than the US or Canada?

What are efficiency measures of policing?

How are housing prices related to crime rates?

Does policy/punishment deter drunk driving?

What does legal aid accomplish and how much should be available?

What is a metric for evaluating the success of the court system in criminal matters?

Why do incarcerations not follow the crime rate more closely in Canada or elsewhere?

The history of crime in various countries. First check to see if data are available!

For ideas you might look at Juristat published by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics which is part of Statistics Canada. A list of Juristats can be found at:  
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/85-002-X>

For every topic you plan on studying, begin by taking a look at ECONLIT which can be accessed through the library at <https://databases.lib.sfu.ca/record/61245148230003610?redirected=1>

For Canadian data you will want to access CANSIM

How to access CANSIM

[https://www.lib.sfu.ca/?utm\\_source=toplink&utm\\_medium=library&utm\\_campaign=homepage](https://www.lib.sfu.ca/?utm_source=toplink&utm_medium=library&utm_campaign=homepage)

Type in "CANSIM" (without the quotation marks)

Hit tab marked "Connect" (without the quotation marks)

Hit: continue in English

Hit: [CANSIM Multidimensional @ CHASS Main Menu](#)

Hit: [Browse tables by subjects](#)

Hit: Crime and Justice

Hit: a topic of your choice

Within that topic, choose (click on) a series.

For example:

***Tables by subjects Crime and justice / Crimes and offences***

*The search returned 61 tables:*

1. 35100152 (2550001) [\[info\]](#) [\[olap view -new-\]](#) [\[by dimensions\]](#) [\[by series\]](#) *Actual traffic offences reported, by type of offence...*

Choose the different views to see what appeals to you as a way to characterize and describe the series.

For example: click on "by dimensions"

This will give you a wide variety of options in retrieving data.

Click on the data you want

Click on "submit"

Click on "select all"

Click on "add selected series to the cart"

Click on "select all" (again)

Click on "retrieve all series from the cart"

Data are also available online from several national databases. There are likely many others, but these are illustrative:

The UK

<https://data.police.uk/>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice>

<https://www.crime-statistics.co.uk/>

Australia

<http://www.crimestats.aic.gov.au/>

[http://crimestats.aic.gov.au/facts\\_figures/](http://crimestats.aic.gov.au/facts_figures/)

<https://aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi359>

### The European Union

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Crime\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Crime_statistics)  
[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Crime\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Archive:Crime_statistics)  
<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/crime/overview>

### The US

<https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s>  
<https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/>  
<https://www.bjs.gov/>

### The UN

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/United-Nations-Surveys-on-Crime-Trends-and-the-Operations-of-Criminal-Justice-Systems.html>

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/crimedata.html>

<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/statistics.html>

<https://dataunodc.un.org/>

## Reading list for *Introduction to Crime Courses*

Easton, Furness and Brantingham, “The Cost of Crime in Canada: 2014 Report” available at:

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/research/cost-crime-canada-2014-report>;

Easton ed., *Privatizing Correctional Services* available at: <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/privatizing-correctional-services>; and

Easton, “Marijuana Growth in British Columbia” available at: <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/marijuana-growth-in-british-columbia>

Robert Cooter and Thomas Ulen, *Law and Economics*, 6th edition available free at

<https://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/books/2/> chapter 12.

### Week 1: Introduction and Overview

The data of crime: Easton, Furness and Brantingham, “The Cost of Crime in Canada: 2014 Report pages 1-23

How we know a crime has been committed. 97-101

See part 1 of the Appendix for the location of Juristat and how to access it.

See part 2 of the Appendix for the way to access CANSIM

### Week 2: The Cost of Crime

Easton, Furness and Brantingham, “The Cost of Crime in Canada: 2014 Report” 23-44

Anderson, David A. “The Aggregate Burden of Crime” *Journal of Law and Economics* Vol XLII (Oct. 1999): 611-642 gives similar issues related to the US.

Brand, S. & Price, R. (2000). The economic and social costs of crime. *Home Office Research Study 217*(NA), p. 1-100. Retrieved from, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs/hors217.pdf>

“What are the Costs of Crime?” in Czabanski, J. (2008). *Estimates of the cost of crime: History, methodologies, and implications*. Warszawa, Poland: Springer-Varlag Berlin Heidelberg

<http://www.springerlink.com/content/978-3-540-69803-6/#section=161485&page=3&locus=100>

### Weeks 3 - 4: What is the Legal/Economic Characterization of a Crime?

\*Robert Cooter and Thomas Ulen, *Law and Economics*, 6th edition available at

<https://scholarship.law.berkeley.edu/books/2/> chapter 12.

Yezer, 1 and 2: Civil Law and Criminal Law

### Week 5 - 6: Theories of Crime

Yezer: chapters 4 and 5

Easton, “Farmers and Bandits”

Oliver, Alison “The Economics of Crime: An Analysis of Crime Rates in America” *The Park Place Economist*, Volume 10:30-35.

Ehrlich, I. "Crime, Punishment, and the Market for Offenses" *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* Volume 10, Issue 1 (Winter 1996): 43-67.

Becker, Gary S. "Crime and Punishment: An Economic Approach" *Journal of Political Economy* Volume 78 Issue 2 (March-April, 1968): 169-217. This is the "classic" piece that "started" economists on the analysis of crime

Becker's is the classic article in this field. You should "look" at it and get a sense of how Becker likes to think about and talk about issues. Do not worry about the mathematics

Gordon Tullock, "An Economic Approach to Crime", *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (June, 1969), pp. 59-71 Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42858461>

John J. Donohue III, Steven D. Levitt. "The Impact of Legalized Abortion on Crime." *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 116, Number 2 (May 1, 2001), pp. 379-420.

### **Capital Punishment**

Avio, Kenneth L. "Capital Punishment in Canada: A Time Series Analysis of the Death Penalty" *Canadian Journal of Economics* Volume 12 (Nov., 1979): 647-676

Layson, Stephen. "Homicide and Deterrence: Another View of the Canadian Time-Series Evidence" *Canadian Journal of Economics* 16 (February 1983): 52-73.

Wolpin, Kenneth I. "Capital Punishment and Homicide in England: A Summary of Results" *American Economic Review* Volume 68 (May 1977): 422-427.

### **The Justice System: Policing, Courts and Prisons**

\*Easton, Furness and Brantingham, 45-96

\*Easton, Stephen T. ed., *Privatizing Correctional Services* (Fraser Institute, 2000) Read chapters by Easton, Thomas and Logan. HV 9506 P75 1998

"Paradise Lost & Regained: Crime in Canada and Around the World" *Fraser Forum* (March 2001): 5-7, 10.

Ken Avio, "The Economics of Prisons" *European Journal of Law and Economics* 6:143-198 (1998)

Avio, Kenneth, L. (1991). "On Private Prisons: an Economic Analysis of the Model Contract and Model Statute for Private Incarceration." *New England Journal on Criminal and Civil Confinement*. 17, 265-300.

Kelly Bedard and, Eric Helland. "The location of women's prisons and the deterrence effect of "harder" time" *International Review of Law and Economics* 24 (2004) 147-167

Gendreau, Paul, Tracy Little, and Claire Goggin. November 1996. "A Meta-Analysis of the Predictors of Adult Offender Recidivism: What Works," *Criminology*, Vol. 34, Number 4, pages 575-608.

Andrews, D.A., Ivan Zinger, Robert D. Hoge, James Bonta, Paul Gendreau, and Francis T. Cullen. August 1990. "Does Correctional Treatment Work? A clinically relevant and psychologically informed meta-analysis," *Criminology*, Vol. 28, No. 3, pages 369-404.

Tonry, Michael and Joan Petersilia, *Prisons*, University of Chicago Press, Vol. 26, 1999. (chapters by Blumstein and Beck; Caplow and Simon, Hagan and Dinovitzer, and Gaes et al.)

## **The Underground Economy: Prohibitions: Alcohol and Marijuana**

\*Mark Thornton, "Alcohol Prohibition was a Failure", *Policy Analysis*, Cato Policy Analysis No. 157 (July 17, 1991) <https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/alcohol-prohibition-was-failure>

\*Stephen T. Easton, "Marijuana Growth in British Columbia" (Fraser Institute, 2004) <https://www.fraserinstitute.org/studies/marijuana-growth-in-british-columbia>

\*Stephen T. Easton, "The Legalization of Marijuana and a Remembrance of Things Past" in Andrew Potter and Danial Weinstein eds., High Time: The Legalization and Regulation of Cannabis in Canada, (McGill-Queens University Press, 2019): 165-181.

Clark Warburton, The Economic Results of Prohibition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932)

Gray, James Henry, Booze: the Impact of Whisky on the Prairie West. (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1972). 243 pp. HV 5306 G7

Kyvig, David E., ed. Law Alcohol and Order: Perspectives on National Prohibition (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985) see chapters 8, 9, 11.

## **Organized Crime**

\*Kugler, M., Verdier, T., and Zenou, Y. "Organized crime, corruption and punishment" Journal of Public Economics 89 (2005): 1639-1663.

Thomas Schelling, "Economics and Criminal Enterprise," The Public Interest, No. 7, Spring 1967.

### *Crime Groups in Canada*

Julian Sher and William Marsden, How the Biker Gangs are Conquering Canada (Alfred A. Knopf, 2003) A good discussion of what is happening in Canada and very specifically, Vancouver.

See also the series in the Vancouver Sun

### *The Mafia*

Dickie, John. Cosa Nostra: A History of the Sicilian Mafia (Hodder and Stoughton, 2004) A basic history of the Sicilian mafia.

Giovanni Falcone (with Marcelle Padovani), Men of Honour: the truth about the Mafia (London: Fourth Estate, 1992) HV 6453 I82 F3513 1992 The book written by the man who was responsible for the decline in the Sicilian Mafia for a number of years (until he was murdered.)

In the US (and Canada)

Thomas Repetto, American Mafia: A History of Its Rise to Power (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2004.) HV6446R47 2004

### *Yakuza*

David E. Kaplan and Alec Dubro, Yakuza: Japan's criminal underworld (Berkeley: University of California Press, c2003) 400 p. HV 6453 J33 Y355 2003

Hill, Peter B. E. The Japanese Mafia: Yakuza, Law, and the State (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.) HV 6453 J33 H55 2003

Bertil Lintner, Blood Brothers: The Criminal Underworld of Asia (Palgrave Macmillan. 2002)

### *Triads*

Gould, Terry. Paper Fan: the Hunt for Triad Gangster Steven Wong (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2004) Triads in Vancouver through 2003.

McIllwain, Jeffrey Scott. Organizing Crime in Chinatown (Jefferson, North Carolina: Mc Farland & Company, 2003) HV6452 N7 M37 2004

Chin, Ko-lin. Heijin: Organized Crime Business and Politics in Taiwan (M.E. Sharp, Inc.: Armonk, NY, 2003). HV 6453 T28 C485 2003

Chin, Ko-lin. Chinese Subculture and Criminality: Non-traditional Crime Groups in America (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) HV 6791 C53 1990

Frank Robertson, Triangle of Death: Inside Story of the Triads, the Chinese Mafia (London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977) HS 294 R6

### **Other**

Howie Carr, The Brothers Bulger. (New York: Warner Books, 2006) HV 6452 M4 2006  
Corruption and power in Boston, the FBI and contemporary political leaders whose names you will know. (Whitey Bulger was captured in 2011 and died in 2017.)

### **Criminal Networks**

\*Easton, S. T. and Karaivanov, A. "Understanding Optimal Criminal Networks", Global Crime, Volume 10, Issue 1 & 2 (February 2009): 41 – 65.

### **Gun Control**

Gary Mauser, "Gun Control is Not Crime Control" (Fraser Institute, 1996, update 1999)

Mauser, Gary A. and Dennis Maki "An Evaluation of the 1977 Canadian Firearm Legislation: Robbery Involving a Firearm" Applied Economics. March 2003; 35(4): 423-36.

**Lott, John R., Jr. More Guns, Less Crime: Understanding Crime and Gun-control Laws** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 225 pp. KF 3941 L68 1998

Rathjen, Heidi. **December 6: from the Montreal massacre to gun control: the inside story** (Toronto: M&S, 1999) 211 pp. HV 7439 C3 R37 1999



