



Andy's Spring 2023 shortened version in traditional form, not on line

Advancing Public Safety and Justice Through Community Engagement and Action

Course Premise and Rationale

The premise of the course is that the US criminal justice system must be firmly based on the principles and values of our US democracy and our commitment to justice and equality. It fully recognizes the historical and societal contradictions and issues which have always dogged our society as a standard-bearer for justice and equality. And it stresses the great importance of active community involvement and leadership in addressing these issues and creating greater accountability to the communities which have been afflicted by the major faults in our justice system. Strengthening democratic participation and our social fabric are essential to advancing community safety and justice.

Ironically, Mr. George Floyd's murder by a Minneapolis police officer dramatically increased the pressures on our country to confront these issues and address the need for major reforms and policy changes. These issues are today very much on the minds of all Americans. This is especially true for people of color who historically have borne the brunt of the system's injustice and inequality.

Major debates are underway throughout the country. In addition to localized issues, there are major debates about "defunding the police", "more cops on the beat", "abolitionism" or police reform. In many communities, there is increasing interest in "restorative justice" as a way of assisting victims of crime, reducing incarceration and making it less likely the perpetrator will commit another offense.

The reality is that on a day-to-day basis every one of us lives and works in the immediate dynamic context of our local policing and criminal justice system. Because of their concerns about policing and/or crime, or because of present or past direct involvement with the criminal justice system, most Americans have strong feelings about the police, the courts and corrections system regardless of their passion or preoccupation with other issues.

By examining our criminal justice system generally, and our policing in particular, the course seeks to clarify for students and others why today's criminal justice system functions as it does and compares that with how it was intended to function in our democracy. The course looks to help people understand why and how our nation's founding principles, laws and democracy itself dictate that *we, the people* are the source of all authority including authority in our criminal justice system.

Learning Goals for the Course

This course should develop the students' abilities to

- develop a basic understanding of community safety and criminal justice issues,
- learn about the criminal justice system
- develop a basic understanding of community organizing and other strategies for creating positive change, including developing their capacity to:
 - Reimagine what the goals of a system of community safety and criminal justice should be and what would be the most effective strategies for increasing community safety and reducing crime
 - Imagine how the systems and policies might better serve the communities which are most afflicted by crime and failures in our criminal justice system
 - Develop a vision and strategies for both incremental change and fundamental impact
 - Develop their capacity to involve community residents in the reimagining, organizing, advocacy and leadership

The CLP Network of community + college partnerships prepares people directly impacted by poverty and racism to enter careers and take leadership in addressing injustice and improving the quality of life in their communities and the broader society. Visit our website at <http://communitylearningpartnership.org/> to learn more.

After taking this introductory course, at the Community Learning Partnership we hope that students will go on to deepen their vision, knowledge and skills and join with others in a fundamental reimagining and reform of criminal justice systems, including steps to –

- Rethink the roles, composition and strategies of a policing system
- Rethink the roles of the community; essential elements
- Rethink the roles of other government and nonprofit agencies
- Rethink the possible goals of the community justice system-
 - Punishing a person for the offense
 - Getting offenders off the street by jailing them – alternatives
 - Setting an example to deter others
 - Reforming the offenders
 - Preparing them for jobs and living normal lives, not returning to crime
 - Helping victims recover from offense
 - Helping a community strengthen its own systems of justice and safety

Course Topics/Modules

- A. Introductions; Your Community and Safety and Justice
- B. The Rule of Law, Policing and Community
- C. Democracy and the police
- D. Major Alternatives for Future Policing
- E. Alternative Strategies for Creating Positive Change
- Conclusion
- Appendixes

Module A: Introductions; Your Community, Safety and Justice

Student Learning Objectives - Module A: Weeks 1 – 3

- To know and understand the objectives and requirements of the course. –
- To begin building relationships among the students –
- To introduce basic concepts concerning community, crime, violence and public safety –

1. Welcome and General Introductions

- Session framing questions
 - Why are you taking this course? What are you hoping to learn?
 - Why is this course important to you, to your community?
- Course objectives, syllabus and materials
 - General introductions
 - “Creating-community” icebreaker

Homework assignment (HW): Watch the movie Coco, keeping in mind the presented Mexican tradition of Dia de los Muertos. For the next session bring in an artifact that speaks to who you are and the community/communities with which you identify.

2. Your Individual Story and Your Community

- Self-introductions: telling your own story and your connection to your artifact (reflect on –what is your story? is it unique?)
- Group discussion of the significance of artifacts and what they say about your community, family, culture, ancestors; What is your neighborhood

Public Narrative – Click for PDF Download

HW: Write two-page essay for next class. Describe your community, and what you like and don't like about it.

3. Your community, crime and safety

- Are crime and violence issues in your community? your neighborhood?

- Why do some communities have more crime than others?
- What issues are having the greatest impact on your community?
 - Each student individually identifies the top three policing-public safety issues that are impacting his/her neighborhood
 - Each student explains his/her choices and lists them on newsprint/whiteboard for all to see.
 - Students discuss issues identified and decide upon the 2-3 which are shared most often.
- What changes would you like to see? What can the community do about them?
- How does your community view the police? Why?

HW: Read and review ABCD Toolkit (handout). Using an ABCD analysis and approach, draw a map of your community/neighborhood

What is Asset Based Community Development?

- *Your community's assets and strengths*
- *Its deficits – how could they be remedied?*
- *How could we increase your community's assets and strengths?*

HW: Write two-page essay on the following question: What would happen in your community concerning crime and public safety if there were no police?

2. Reading and Discussion of Student Essays

- Why do you think crime or violence would increase?
- Is policing the only way to reduce crime? What are the assets and deficits in the current system of policing and justice?
 - Is there a “system”?
 - Is justice achieved/achievable?
- What other means can reduce crime and violence? What assets and strengths does your community offer?

HW: Write two-page essay on who or what institutions should be responsible for deciding what is the law and public policy regarding crime and how it is reduced. Why?

Module B: The Rule of Law, Policing and Community

Student Learning Objectives - Module C and D: Weeks 4 – 9

- To provide definitions for thinking about crime and violence in the US
- To provide democracy and Peel's rules as frameworks for understanding US law and policing
- To understand the historical and present role of race and /or class in the administration and operation of the US legal system.
- To have students identify issues of public safety, violence, crime and policing in his/her neighborhood together with their causes and possible solutions

- To understand the power and role of the people in our society especially as concerns state and local government
- To introduce the concepts of ideal visioning and community organizing

HW: Read the US Declaration of Independence and the Constitution

1. Law-Making in the US

- Why do we have laws? Who makes them?
- What is a “crime”? Who decides?
- What is the source of the authority to make laws and decide what’s a crime?
- What is or should be the role of the people in making laws? How do/can they participate?

Discussion of founding of America and founding documents

HW: Read the Pledge of Allegiance, the article on Colin Kaepernick, the US Bill of Rights

2. What does it mean to be an American (past and present)?

- Recitation of Pledge of Allegiance (standing, hand over heart)
- Discussion of experience of reciting it, reaction and feelings?
- What does it mean in the context of our law and justice to be an American? A Citizen? A US resident? A person of color in the US?

HW: Assigned reading on Race in America

3. Race in America: A Brief History

- The founding documents, Native Americans and slavery
- A brief history of race in America

HW: Essay (two pages): Do we have equality and justice under the law? What provisions in the Bill of Rights focus on the rights of a person accused of a crime?

4. The Bill of Rights: Founding Fathers’ Protection from Government Intrusion

- Why do so many provisions in the Bill of Rights focus on the rights of a person accused of a crime?
- What is the role of the Police and Law Enforcement in a democratic society?
 - Policing in a non-democratic: authoritarian, dictatorship, religious state
 - Policing in our democratic and complex society
 - Upholding the Constitution including the Bill of Rights
 - Committed to practicing equal protection of the laws and due process
 - Policing at the local level: No national police in US

- Accountability to the community served
- Why do you need protection from the government intrusion?
- What is “due process”? What is “equal protection under the law”?

HW: Read Sir Robert Peel's Nine Rule of Policing; Divide class into three groups, one to study Rules 1-3, the second 4-6, and the last Rules 7-9.

5. Peel's Rules for Modern Policing

Use Peel's Rules as a framework for discussing community/police partnerships and community's role in prevention and community safety as well as criminal justice. (See endnotes below for text of Peel's Rules.

These rules were developed in 1829 when Sir Robert Peel established London's Metropolitan Police Force. He became known as the “Father of Modern Policing,” and his commissioners established a list of policing principles that ARE SEEN BY THE POLICE AND COURTS AS BEDROCK PRINCIPLES, THOUGH OFTEN VIOLATED OR IGNORED. They therefore can be used to argue for many of the reforms people of color and residents of low-income and working-class communities want to see.

- Each reading group identifies 2-3 main points they draw from their Rules, debrief to whole class, reach consensus on Peel's 3 most important points
- Discussion by entire class of Rule 7: “The police are the public and the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.”ⁱ

Module C: Democracy and the Police

[Click Here for Student Learning Objectives](#)

HW: Written assignment: Answer the following questions:

- *How do you keep track of what your local/state government is doing and why?*
- *If you wanted to contact the local Democratic or Republican Party, how would you do it?*
- *Which local politician do you think responds best to your community's views on issues of community safety and justice? Why?*

1. Local and State Government

- Discussion of answers from homework questions

- The Police and Police Commissioner are highly visible and well-known government officials.
 - Who supervises them? How public is this process?
 - What is the role of the community vis-à-vis the accountability of government officials on issues of local policing, public safety and justice?
 - How important are voting and electoral politics on issues of policing and public safety?

2. State and federal roles

- The States' roles related to local government and issues of crime, policing, rights
 - Due process
 - Equal justice under law
 - Civil rights and the role of the US Department of Justice; consent decrees
 - Civil liberties

3. Opportunities for influence

- Points of intervention – elections, as policy is made, and oversight (LINK)
- The role of the courts
- Conducting a power analysis
- Opportunities to influence the local executive, legislative and judicial branches – (Advocacy Guide handout)
- Opportunities to intervene at the state and federal level

Module D: Major Alternatives for Future Policing

Student Learning Objectives - Module D: Weeks 9-10

- To familiarize students with the major debates on the future of policing
- To broaden their understanding of the controversies over “defunding” the police and “abolition”
- To introduce students to a variety of reform efforts led by the police, political leaders, affected communities, advocacy organizations and the federal government, including “restorative justice”

HW: read selections from Mariam Kaba's We Do This Til We Free Us

6. The Great Debate — The Future of Policing

Locally and nationally, Americans are deeply divided on basic issues of policing, community safety and criminal justice. They divide into three basic camps –

- **“Tough on Crime”** – Advocates for “more cops on the beat” and “getting tougher” with crime and criminals
- **“Police Reform”** – Reformers who have steadily pushed for incremental reforms in police recruitment, training, oversight and discipline, and for strategies bringing the police and the community together to collaborate and reduce tensions
- **“Defund the Police” and “Abolitionism”** – Proponents of more fundamental changes, including “defunding the police”, “abolition”, and a deep rethinking of the roles of the police, the community, and new ways of increasing community safety and justice.

Students can benefit from learning more about the pros and cons of each of these positions, and having a chance to reimagine how we could improve both “community safety” and “justice” under our criminal justice system.

HW: Assigned readings on restorative justice

7. Restorative Justice

Native Americans and people from many other cultures have developed restorative justice practices over the centuries, and they are now being used successfully in a variety of situations including criminal cases, cases of child or elder abuse, interpersonal violence, rape, disputes among students, and conflicts which arise in jails and prisons.

The focus on punishment within the US criminal legal system typically does not serve to heal the person harmed or provide space for genuine accountability and growth for the person who caused the harm. Restorative justice shifts the impact of our current systems by making a radical commitment to meeting the needs of those harmed, those who caused harm, and community members. The restorative justice process allows for all their voices and needs to be heard.

“Restorative justice” interventions involve the coordinated efforts of a group of people to address, reduce, end or prevent crimes, violence and conflict. While often these interventions are by the courts, police, child welfare or social services, many times they are “community-based”, organized and carried out by friends, family, neighbors, co-workers or community members,

Participants operate as a team – usually with an experienced facilitator — and consider the good of everyone involved in the situation – including those harmed (survivors or victims of violence), those who have caused harm, and community members affected by violence. They may include others who can help in developing a healing process and agreement among the principal parties.

[Restorative Justice Module](#)

Critical questions about punishment:

- What does incarceration accomplish currently?
- What do you want to achieve with an offender?
 - Punishment
 - Reform the perpetrator to reduce future criminal behavior
 - Make victims whole, supporting, healing and strengthening them
 - Deter others from committing the kind of crime
- How well are those goals being met under the current criminal justice system?
- What negative impacts does incarceration have on the perpetrator? The society?
- Rethinking punishment

8. Other possible reforms to increase community safety and justice

- Expanding the community's roles in reducing crime
- Decriminalization of minor offenses
- Expanded access to mental health services
- Gun safety and controls
- Drug reform, decriminalization, access to drugs Adopting Restorative Justice and other approaches to reducing recidivism and reoffending
- Prison and parole reforms
- Reentry programs
- Social reforms which can reduce crime
 - Reducing poverty
 - Better schools, job training, apprenticeships and career ladders
 - Jobs for youth
 - Strengthening neighborhoods, invest in community building,

See Appendix 3 with links to materials on many of these reforms to promote greater community safety and justice and a possible set of small group explorations.

Module E: Alternative Strategies for Creating Change

Student Learning Objectives - Module E: Weeks 10 -12

- To provide a foundational introduction to community organizing, its concepts and workings, as a core strategy for change based on community empowerment
- To have the student learn and understand how community organizing could catalyze change in his/her neighborhood, on his/her block
- To provide the students with historical and contemporary examples of successful change grounded in the local and guided by community organizing
- To inspire the student to become more civically engaged by joining a local group or organization in his/her neighborhood or community doing community organizing based change work

As with other modules, each instructor must decide how much time to allocate to this set of issues. Have students already been introduced to the assumptions and theory behind community organizing? Do they know how it differs from other change strategies? Are they familiar with the roles “organizers” play and the basic steps in developing an organizing campaign?.

HW reading:

- *“We Do This ‘Til We Free Us”* by Mariame Kaba, [pp.163-186](#)
- *Rules for Radicals* by Saul Alinsky – pp 63-124
- *To Tackle Racial Justice, Organizing Must Change*, *The Forge*

Raining Rocks Parable (40 mins)??

How do you create change in our society?

- Can major change be centered or controlled locally? Or must it be driven/guided structured around a political philosophy or economic theory, for example democracy or capitalism?
- What is “progressive” change in our society? Is it the only kind of change that can happen?
- What is “transformative” change?
- Changing US Policing and Public Safety: What actually changes? and How does the community make the changes? Dealing with lack of progress, issues of hopelessness

What is the difference between “community organizing” and other change strategies like advocacy and movement-building?

The main alternative approaches to creating changes in policy and practice, and how they differ

- Advocacy
- Media
- Social movements
- Nonviolence
- Rebellion and revolution
- Politics and electoral strategies
- Community organizing

The theory and practice of community organizing

- Assumptions and principles
- Basic elements and practices
- How organizing can connect with and strengthen other strategies

Marshall Ganz, a famous organizer and Professor at Harvard, described the essence of community organizing in the following words:

“I think of organizing as one way of practicing leadership in which the first question to ask is not what’s my issue, but who are my people? With whom am I entering into a contract here? And second, what is the change they need from their perspective? What are the problems that they encounter, and what would change look like? Third, how can I enable them to turn their resources into the power they need to accomplish that change?—and I distinguish from providing services to clients, and I distinguish from marketing products to customers. It’s about enabling people to become a constituency, come together, stand together, decide together, act together and win together.”

Guest speakers, especially community organizers and leaders can add greatly to this discussion and to the students’ interest and learning.

Conclusion and Feedback

Over the years every teacher develops their own way of concluding a course. For this course it may include:

- Summarizing the main themes and lessons from the course
 - Involving students in an assessment of the course, including suggestions for strengthening it for the future
 - Inspiring students to learn more about community organizing and change work and to become involved on community safety and criminal and social justice issues
 - Familiarizing students with the range of career and leadership opportunities which would enable them to work to create positive social and community change on these issues
-