

Institutions, Crime, and Violence

POLS2040 – Fall 2020

Professor: David Skarbek

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Office hours: 2-4 on Thursdays at 25 George St.

Seminar times and location:

Wednesdays at 4:00 to 6:30pm in Watson room 140

Class Description

This class examines the relationships between institutions, criminal actors, and violence. State-based institutions play an important role in explaining the level of crime and whether crime is disorganized or organized. Organized crime groups, in turn, influence both state-based institutions (for example, through corrupting officials) and other criminal activity, often by creating the “rules of the game” by which other criminals can act. Finally, both criminal actors and state-based institutions influence the level of violence in society. Each of these three influences, and is influenced by, the others. This course offers the opportunity to better understand how these three factors relate to each other. It will engage with both major works on the topic and with recently published research and working papers. This will allow the student to develop a theoretically grounded framework to make empirical arguments and contribute to debates in the social sciences on crime and violence.

Educational aims

The aims of the class are:

- To develop an understanding of why mafia groups form, how they organize, and what they do.
- To develop an understanding of what factors give rise to or increase the prevalence of mafia groups during transitions from autocratic to democratic regimes.
- To develop an understanding of why some criminal groups evolve into mafias and other do not and why some mafia groups are capable of migrating to new regions and others are not.
- To develop an understanding of the conditions in which criminal groups engage in activities, such as the illegal trade of drugs, kidnapping for ransom, and extortion.

Learning outcomes

By the end of this class, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the literature on organized crime and mafias.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the broader literature that studies governance and institutions.
- Demonstrate extensive knowledge on an issue related to the course material. This may be demonstrated in the form of a lengthy research paper.
- Make a novel contribution to the study of the political economy of organized crime.

Grading

Your grade will be determined by the following components:

- 5% - Weekly paper ideas
- 35% - Participation
- 60% - Final paper

Paper Ideas

Starting on the second week of class, you will submit 3-4 weekly paper ideas that are inspired by the week's readings. Each one should only be a few sentences. These are not "fully baked" or even semi-baked paper ideas. They can be completely infeasible or simply impossible to actually execute. The purpose of doing this is to practice brainstorming ideas based on strengths and weaknesses in what we read.

Participation

This class is discussion-based. Therefore, it is crucial that you show up for each seminar having completed all of the required readings. This will help us to generate more diverse ideas and perspectives, and it will provide experience for future teaching roles.

You should have comments and questions in mind for discussion. I will provide a guide on how to read an academic paper, but things to think about when reading an article include:

- Is this a descriptive or causal claim?
- What is the causal argument?
- What data are used? Are the data accurate, reliable, and appropriate?
- Does the paper use a theory to derive empirical implications?
- What is the theory and how plausible is it?
- What other empirical implications would the theory predict?
- Are there different interpretations of the findings?
- What are the best alternative explanations?
- Did the author leave out other important factors or ignore problems of reverse-causality?

Most required readings are available or linked to on CANVAS.

I encourage you to read the guidance on how to productively read journal articles:

- ASR Review Guideline – General
- ASR Review Guideline – Comparative Historical
- ASR Review Guideline – Empirical and Policy

Final Paper

The final paper can address any of the themes or ideas that we discuss. It can be theoretical, empirical, or conceptual. It will probably not be a perfectly polished first draft of a journal article, but that is what you should aim for. It should have a clear research question. The paper should explain how it fills a gap in the literature. You should discuss what research methods you will use to answer the research question. Papers should be formatted along the guidelines of the APSR, AJPS, or JOP. We will discuss this further in class. You must confirm your paper topic with me by **October 5**.

September 7: How is a mafia like a state? How is a state like a mafia?

Mancur Olson. 1993. Dictatorship, democracy, and development. *American Political Science Review*.

Margaret Levi. 1988. *Of Rule and Revenue*. Chapters 2 and 3.

Randall Holcombe. 1994. *The Economic Foundations of Government*. Chapter 5: The Distinction between Clubs and Governments.

Benjamin Lessing. 2021. Conceptualizing Criminal Governance. *Perspectives on Politics*.

Raúl Sánchez De La Sierra, R. 2020. On the origins of the state: Stationary bandits and taxation in eastern Congo. *Journal of Political Economy*

Optional Reading:

Charles Tilly. 1985. War making and state making as organized crime. *Bringing the State Back In*.

September 14: What explains the variation in mafia presence and activity? I

Federico Varese. 2010. "What is Organized Crime?" in *Organized Crime: Volume 1*. Routledge. Only pages 14-22.

Thomas Schelling. 1971. "What is the Business of Organized Crime?" *Journal of Public Law*.

Federico Varese. 1994. "Is Sicily the future of Russia? Private protection and the rise of the Russian Mafia" *European Journal of Sociology*

Federico Varese. 2011. *Mafias on the Move*. Chapter 2

David Skarbek. 2014. *Social Order of the Underworld*. Chapters 2 and 3.

Optional Readings:

Timothy Frye. 2002. "Private protection in Russia and Poland" *American Journal of Political Science*.

Diego Gambetta. 1993. *The Sicilian Mafia: the business of private protection*. Harvard University Press.

Anja Shortland and Federico Varese. 2014. "The Protector's Choice" *British Journal of Criminology*.

Federico Varese. 2001. *The Russian Mafia: private protection in a new market economy*. Oxford University Press.

Federico Varese, Jakub Lonsky, AND Yuriy Podvysotskiy. 2021. The resilience of the Russian mafia: an empirical study. *The British Journal of Criminology*.

Vadim Volkov. 2002. *Violent entrepreneurs: The use of force in the making of Russian capitalism*. Cornell University Press.

Vadim Volkov. 1999. Violent entrepreneurship in post-communist Russia. *Europe-Asia Studies*.

Peng Wang. 2017. *The Chinese Mafia: Organized Crime, Corruption, and Extra-Legal Protection*. Oxford University Press.

September 21: What explains the variation in mafia presence and activity? II

Paolo Buonanno, Ruben Durante, Giovanni Prarolo, and Palo Vanin. 2015. Poor institutions, rich mines: resource curse in the origins of the Sicilian mafia. *The Economic Journal*.

Daron Acemoglu, Giuseppe De Feo, and Giacomo De Luca. 2017. "Weak States: Causes and Consequences of the Sicilian Mafia." *Review of Economic Studies*.

Chris Blattman, Gustavo Duncan, Benjamin Lessing, and Santiago Tobón. 2021. Gang rule: Understanding and countering criminal governance. National Bureau of Economic Research.

David Skarbek. 2014. *Social Order of the Underworld*. Chapter 4

Alberto Aziani, Serena Favarin, and Gian Maria Campedelli. 2020. Security Governance: Mafia Control over Ordinary Crimes. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*.

Optional Reading:

Oriana Bandiera. 2003. Land reform, the market for protection, and the origins of the Sicilian mafia: theory and evidence. *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization*.

Arcangelo Dimico, Alessia Isopi, and Ola Olsson. 2017. Origins of the Sicilian mafia: The market for lemons. *The Journal of Economic History*.

Curtis Milhaupt and Mark West. 2000. The Dark Side of Private Ordering: An Institutional and Empirical Analysis of Organized Crime. *University of Chicago Law Review*

Peter Reuter. 1983. *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of the Visible Hand*. MIT Press.

Annalisa Scognamiglio, A. (2018). When the mafia comes to town. *European Journal of Political Economy*.

September 28: What explains the variation in mafia presence and activity? III

James Buchanan. 1973. "A Defense of Organized Crime?" from *The Economics of Crime and Punishment*.

Maria Micaela Sviatschi. 2022. Spreading Gangs: Exporting US Criminal Capital to El Salvador. *American Economic Review*.

Ciro Biderman, João M. P. De Mello, Renato De Lima, and Alexandre Schneider. 2019. *Pax monopolista* and crime: the case of the emergence of the *Primeiro Comando da Capital* in São Paulo. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*.

Stephanie Stahlberg. 2022. From prison gangs to transnational mafia: the expansion of organized crime in Brazil. *Trends in Organized Crime*.

David Skarbek. 2017. Covenants without the sword? Comparing prison self-governance globally. *American Political Science Review*.

October 5: How do organized crime groups tax?

David Skarbek. 2011. Governance and prison gangs. *American Political Science Review*.

Danielle Gilbert. 2022. The Logic of Kidnapping in Civil War: Evidence from Colombia. *American Political Science Review*.

Beatriz Magaloni, Gustavo Robles, Aila Matanock, Alberto Diaz-Cayeros, and Vidal Romero. 2020. Living in Fear: the Dynamics of extortion in Mexico's Drug War. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Zach Brown, Eduardo Montero, Carlos Schmidt-Padilla, and Maria Micaela Sviatschi. 2021. Market structure and extortion: Evidence from 50,000 extortion payments. National Bureau of Economic Research.

October 12: How does organized crime organize?

Steven Levitt and Sudhir Venkatesh. 2000. An Economic Analysis of a Drug-Selling Gang's Finances. *Journal of Political Economy*

Peter Leeson. 2007. An-arrgh-chy: The Law and Economics of Pirate Organization. *Journal of Political Economy*.

Benjamin Lessing and Graham Denyer Willis. 2018. Legitimacy in Criminal Governance: Managing a Drug Empire from Behind Bars. *American Political Science Review*

Gabriela Calderón, Gustavo Robles, Alberto Díaz-Cayeros, and Beatriz Magaloni. 2015. The beheading of criminal organizations and the dynamics of violence in Mexico. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

David Skarbek. 2014. *Social Order of the Underworld*. Chapter 5.

Optional Readings:

Andrew Dick. 1995. When Does Organized Crime Pay? A Transaction Cost Analysis *International Review of Law & Economics*.

October 19: Class Cancelled. Christopher Blattman (Chicago) and Jessie Trudeau (PPE Center) talk on Saturday, October 22.

October 26: What explains variation in violence? I

Nicholas Barnes. 2022. The logic of criminal territorial control: Military intervention in Rio de Janeiro. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Laura Blume. 2022. Collusion, Co-Optation, or Evasion: The Politics of Drug Trafficking Violence in Central America. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Beatriz Magaloni, Edgar Franco-Vivanco, and Vanessa Melo. 2020. Killing in the slums: Social order, criminal governance, and police violence in Rio de Janeiro. *American Political Science Review*.

Bradley Holland and Viridiana Rios. 2017. Informally governing information: How criminal rivalry leads to violence against the press in Mexico. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Richard Snyder and Angelica Duran-Martinez. 2009. Does illegality breed violence? Drug trafficking and state sponsored protection rackets. *Crime, law and social change*.

November 2: What explains variation in violence? II

Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley. 2017. Why Did Drug Cartels Go to War in Mexico? Subnational Party Alternation, the Breakdown of Criminal Protection, and the Onset of Large-Scale Violence. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Melissa Dell. 2015. Trafficking networks and the Mexican drug war. *American Economic Review*.

Yuhki Tajima. 2018. Political development and the fragmentation of protection markets: Politically affiliated gangs in Indonesia. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Arindrajit Dube, Oeindrila Dube, and Omar García-Ponce. 2013. Cross-border spillover: US gun laws and violence in Mexico. *American Political Science Review*.

Megan Erickson and Lucas Owen. (2020). Blood Avocados: Cartel Violence Over Licit Industries in Mexico. Working paper.

November 9: What explains variation in violence? III

Jose Migel Cruz and Angelica Durán-Martínez. 2016. Hiding violence to deal with the state: Criminal pacts in El Salvador and Medellin. *Journal of Peace Research*.

Brian Phillips and Viridiana Ríos. 2019. Narco-messages: Competition and public communication by criminal groups. *Latin American Politics and Society*.

Angelica Durán-Martínez. 2015. To Kill and Tell? State Power, Criminal Competition, and Drug Violence. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Guillermo Trejo and Sandra Ley. 2019. High-Profile Criminal Violence: Why Drug Cartels Murder Government Officials and Party Candidates in Mexico. *British Journal of Political Science*.

Ariaster Chimeli and Rodrigo Soares. 2017. The use of violence in illegal markets: Evidence from mahogany trade in the Brazilian Amazon. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*.

November 16: How does organized crime affect politics? I

Giuseppe De Feo and Giacomo De Luca. 2017. Mafia in the ballot box. *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*.

Alberto Alesina, Salvatore Piccolo, and Paolo Pinotti. 2019. Organized crime, violence and politics. *Review of Economic Studies*.

Gianmarco Daniele and Gemma Dipoppa. 2016. Mafia, elections and violence against politicians. *Journal of Public Economics*.

Aldo Ponce, Rodrigo Velázquez López Velarde, and Jaime Santamaría. 2019 “Do local elections increase violence? Electoral cycles and organized crime in Mexico” *Trends in Organized Crime*.

Abby Córdova. 2019. Living in gang-controlled neighborhoods: impacts on electoral and nonelectoral participation in El Salvador. *Latin American Research Review*.

Other Papers:

Gianmarco Daniele and Benny Geys. 2015. Organised crime, institutions and political quality: Empirical evidence from Italian municipalities. *The Economic Journal*.

November 23: No Class – Thanksgiving Break

November 30: How does organized crime affect politics? II

Sandra Ley. 2013. To Vote or Not to Vote: How Criminal Violence Shapes Electoral Participation. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*.

Jessie Bullock. 2022 Machine Gun Politics: Why Politicians Cooperate with Criminal Groups. Working Paper.

Jessie Bullock. 2022. Organized Criminal Groups and Voter Mobilization. Working Paper.

Antonella Bandiera. (2022). The Effect of Rents on Selection and Behavior: Evidence from Illegal Gold Mining in Peru. Working Paper.

Optional Readings:

Ernesto Dal Bó, Pedro Dal Bó, and Rafael Di Tella. 2006. Plata o Plomo? Bribe and Punishment in a Theory of Political Influence. *American Political Science Review*.

Marco Di Cataldo and Nicola Mastrococco. 2016. Organised crime, captured politicians, and the allocation of public resources. *London School of Economics, mimeo*.

Paolo Pinotti. 2015. The Economic Costs of Organised Crime: Evidence from Southern Italy. *Economic Journal*.

Paolo Pinotti. 2015. The Causes and Consequences of Organised Crime: Preliminary Evidence Across Countries. *Economic Journal*.

December 7: How does private and disorganized violence operate?

Regina Bateson. 2021. The Politics of Vigilantism. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Eduardo Moncada. 2017. Varieties of vigilantism: Conceptual discord, meaning and strategies. *Global Crime*.

Dara Kay Cohen, Danielle Jung, and Michael Weintraub. 2022. Introduction to the Special Symposium: Collective Vigilantism in Global Comparative Perspective. *Comparative Politics*.

Danilo Freire and David Skarbek. 2020. Support for Lynching and Vigilantism in Brazil. Working paper.

Brian Phillips. 2016. Inequality and the Emergence of Vigilante Organizations: The Case of Mexican Autodefensas. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Javier Osorio, Livia Schubiger, and Michael Weintraub. 2021. Legacies of resistance: mobilization against organized crime in Mexico. *Comparative Political Studies*.

Other Readings:

Danielle F. Jung and Dara Kay Cohen. 2020. *Lynching and Local Justice*. Cambridge Elements

Accessibility and Accommodations Statement

I am committed to full inclusion of all students. Please inform me early in the term if you may require accommodations or modification of any of course procedures. You may speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you need accommodations around online learning or in classroom accommodations, please be sure to reach out to Student Accessibility Services (SAS) for their assistance (seas@brown.edu, 401-863-9588). Undergraduates in need of short-term academic advice or support can contact an academic dean in the College by emailing college@brown.edu. Graduate students may contact one of the deans in the Graduate School by emailing graduate_school@brown.edu.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, political beliefs, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Brown welcomes students from around the country and the world, and their unique perspectives enrich our learning community. To support students whose primary language is not English, an array of English support services are available on campus including language and culture workshops and individual appointments. For more information, contact english-support@brown.edu or (401) 863-5672.

Academic Integrity

A student's name on any exercise (e.g., a theme, report, notebook, performance, computer program, course paper, quiz, or examination) is regarded as assurance that the exercise is the result of the student's own thoughts and study, stated in his or her own words, and produced without assistance, except as quotation marks, references, and footnotes acknowledge the use of printed sources or other outside help.