

ANTH 279 Policing in the Contemporary World

Professor Amrita Ibrahim

Summer 2020 (July 6th – August 7th)

Mon- Thurs 1-3pm

ICC 119

In North America over the last few years, news stories and images of police brutality have made visible a stark reality of law enforcement – that police can be, and often are, violent in the course of ‘serving and protecting’. This visibility has sparked an increase in activism among and solidarity with groups that are more often at the receiving end of police brutality; most notable among them has been the Black Lives Matter movement. In drawing attention to how policing inherently relies on violence to maintain law and order, activists have tried to draw ordinary Americans into a dialogue that seeks to recognize the role of race, class, and gender in how police power works. In order to understand the critique of police in North America today, it is necessary to understand policing – its social forms and history – more broadly as well.

In this course, you will be introduced to how violence, law, and security are connected and intermeshed across social and cultural contexts. At the heart of the concept of modern policing as we know it since the 19th century, lies the control of race, class, and gender in the service of the emerging capitalist, liberal order. There have been key turns in the ways that we think about policing – from an idea of collective security and monitoring, to the notion of supervision of the lower classes, women, and minorities, to the idea of good and effective governance, and as a last

line of defense between civilization and barbarism, order and chaos, good and evil. How can we think about policing critically - that is, recognizing the role it plays in maintaining unequal social orders while also thinking of effective ways to reform it? Is policing itself even necessary? Could we think about abolishing police?

Anthropology as a discipline is a latecomer to the study of policing per se, even as it has contributed willingly during its own history to the creation of categories such as 'the criminal' or the 'savage'. At the same time, it brings with it a methodological advantage in studying violence and the law, and how communities, individuals, and institutions are shaped through them. Anthropologists spend a long time getting to know the people and places in which they gather their data and observations, crafting detailed ethnographies which allow us to appreciate policing as more than just a bounded institution (for e.g., 'the men in blue') or as a set of policy initiatives (reports and white papers). In his summer course, you will read ethnographies, watch films and documentaries, and analyze visual exhibits that explore how police and policing work across diverse cultural locations.

Through diverse global contexts, you will learn about a range of practices, ideologies, cosmologies, and structures that bind the state, individuals, violence, authority, and security together in our contemporary world. Inspired by the topicality of debates on policing in the United States, but looking beyond them to other social and cultural contexts, the course is designed to teach you to think of policing, as well as its critiques, as global and interrelated phenomena.

Books available at the bookstore or on Amazon. Films will be streaming on Canvas and we will watch some of these in class. The books required for this course are as follows:

1. Ieva Jusionyte. 2015. *Savage Frontiers: Making News and Security on the Argentine Border*. University of California Press.
2. Ilana Feldman. 2015. *Police Encounters: Security and Surveillance in Gaza Under Egyptian Rule*. Stanford University Press.
3. Beatrice Jauregui. 2016. *Provisional Authority: Police, Order, and Security in India*. University of Chicago Press.
4. Pervez Mody. 2008. *The Intimate State: Love-Making and the Law in Delhi*. Routledge.

Course material is being finalized, this is a draft syllabus. The final version will be put on Canvas before the first class and you will receive a paper copy of it in class at the first meeting.

Course Schedule

Week 1 Legacies of Colonialism and Slavery

July 6 Film: *13th* by Ava Duvernay

July 7

July 8 Ilana Feldman's *Police Encounters*

July 9

Week 2 Pop Culture and Police Culture

July 13 Film: *The Thin Blue Line* by Errol Morris

July 14 Beatrice Jauregui's *Provisional Authority*

July 15

July 16 Film: Indian film (will have to be watched beforehand) like *Satya* or *Ardhsatya* or *Ab Tak Chhappan*

Week 3 City, Nation, Borders – Policing Belonging

July 20 Ieva Jusionyte's *Savage Frontiers*

July 21

July 22 *The Act of Killing* by Joshua Oppenheimer OR

July 23

Week 4 Families and Communities – Policing and Social Order

July 27 Film: *Izzatnagar ki Asabhiya Betiyan* by Nakul S. Sawhney

July 28

July 29 Pervez Mody's *The Intimate State*

July 30

Week 5 Reform, Resist, Redo: What does a world without police look like?

August 3 *Please Don't Beat Me, Sir!* By Kerim Freidman and Shashwati Talukdar

August 4 Final Presentations – first 10 people

August 5 Final Presentations – second 10 people

August 6 Final Presentations – last 10 people

Final Projects Due by August 8th at 11 am. Grade will be posted by August 10th.