

Crime Problem Analysis

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Every community has long-term or chronic problems in crime, disorder, and safety, such as an increase in thefts of GPS devices, thefts of copper wire and piping, a park that has been a drug dealing hot spot for a decade, an intersection that is the top traffic accident hot spot in town, noise complaints associated with early-morning trash pickup, and so on. These problems are caused not by a single offender (as in a crime series) but by multiple actors influenced by the right conditions or opportunities. Traditional police responses—patrol, investigation, arrest—do not work to address these underlying causes. In this class, we examine how the thorough

analysis of crime problems can give rise to more creative, more effective problem-solving techniques. The course is particularly valuable for students who plan to enter law enforcement, but some of its strategies and techniques are widely applicable to any criminal justice field.

Course Objectives

In “Crime Problem Analysis,” we synthesize aspects of criminology theory, research methods, statistics, and police strategy to identify, analyze, and solve problems in crime and disorder. By the end of the class, students who complete the material should be able to:

- Distinguish between problems and other public safety phenomena
 - Understand the theoretical foundations of problem analysis and Problem-Oriented Policing
 - Use several methods to identify existing and emerging crime problems
 - Analyze characteristics of crime problems from a data set
 - Conduct their own qualitative research into the causes of crime problems
- Apply creative crime prevention techniques to crime problems
 - Analyze displacement and diffusion
 - Describe how the problem-oriented policing process works in a typical police agency



Required Texts

All required texts for this course are available online and will be linked into the appropriate sections of the course. These include web pages, guides, and handouts from the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing at <http://www.popcenter.org>.

The main “text” for the course is:

Clarke, R. V., & Eck, J. E. (2005). *Crime Analysis for Problem Solvers: In 60 Small Steps*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services. Available at <http://www.popcenter.org/library/reading/PDFs/60steps.pdf>

About the Instructor

Christopher Bruce has been a crime analyst for over 15 years, starting his career at the Cambridge Police

Department and now working in Danvers. He became the President of the International Association of Crime Analysts in 2007 after serving as the Vice President of Administration for six years. He was also the President of the Massachusetts Association of Crime Analysts from 2000-2004. Bruce was the senior editor of the IACA's *Exploring Crime Analysis* (2004), and in 2005 co-wrote *Better Policing with Microsoft Office*. He teaches crime analysis for Suffolk University, Tiffin University, the University of Massachusetts at Lowell, Middlesex Community College, and Westfield State College.

Course Format and Instructor Availability

"Crime Problem Analysis" is an asynchronous class, meaning that both students and the instructor will sign in to the course pages on their own schedules and work independently of each other, but see "student expectations" below for minimum requirements.

I will generally check the course page every day, usually in the morning, and respond to e-mail at that time. You can almost always expect a response to e-mail within 24 hours. If you need a quicker response, or if you simply prefer the telephone, all students are encouraged to call me at 978-853-3502 at any time. If I cannot answer, simply leave a message and I will call you back soon.

Student Expectations

Students enrolled in Crime Problem Analysis are expected to:

- Have stable Internet access, intermediate-level computer skills, and familiarity with the PLATO course environment. Inability to access the site, navigate the pages, or open files will not excuse you for missed or late assignments.
- Complete all the assigned readings and assignments.
- Have basic skills in Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel (or a similar word processor and spreadsheet program)
- Keep a current e-mail address on file in their PLATO profiles. The instructor must be able to reach students by e-mail.
- Check in to the course several times per unit and post responses to the discussion topics for the week. Students who complete all of their postings on the same day, or who do not post until the end of the unit, will receive lower grades.
- Start each unit's assignments towards the beginning of the unit, so as to work out any problems (technological or otherwise) as early as possible.
- Contact the instructor if they have any difficulties.