Students will explore the relationship between community conditions and violence. They will learn not only about the ways in which violence affects a community, but also develop techniques for measuring incidence and evaluating community response.

On the one hand, information on violence is often presented as “disembodied statistics.” We see data on the number of murders, robberies or car thefts nationally, with little attention to the actual risks in particular communities. On the other hand, we are barraged with news images that emphasize the most violent and disturbing crimes. If workplace violence or domestic violence or gang violence is “hot,” we might see more coverage of those types of crimes than of other types. The purpose of this course is to explore the nature and extent of violence in an urban community and community response to that violence.

One Boston community will be selected as the site for field visits and panel discussions by community leaders concerned with violence prevention.

Students will visit community sites and meet representatives from criminal justice agencies, emergency medical services and hospitals, community service programs and religious organizations. Special topics will include: community structure and violence; building relationships between community groups, police and courts; and youth violence; and the needs of persons for whose first language is not English.

Dates:
Tues July 29: 6-10 pm. Students will receive an overview of the course and an introductory lecture focusing on the community to be examined.
Film (tentative): Bowling for Columbine
Students will receive initial reading assignments and have the chance to pick up books from the bookstore. Readings will be required before the intensive class week.

Text:

Additional hand-out material will be provided during the course.
Reading:
Chapter 4. Theories of Violence. pp. 81-114.
Chapter 5. Homicides and Assaults. pp. 115-152.
Chapter 12. The Role of Drugs and Alcohol in Violence. pp. 319-346.

August 9: 9am to 5 pm. On campus.
Theoretical approaches to violence
Discussion of Chapters 1 and 4 in Riedel and Welsh.
The view from the media
Socio-economic factors
The role of social institutions in the creation and management of patterns of violence.
Political/social dimensions

August 25 through 28; 9am to 5 pm.
Field visits, panel discussions and lectures (primarily in community settings).

August 25: Police, courts, correctional facilities.
Discussion of Chapters 5 and 6 in Riedel and Welsh.
Overview of the criminal justice perspective

August 26: Medical and psychiatric programs (community health center)
Discussion of Chapters 7, 8 and 10 in Riedel and Welsh.
Programs for victims and perpetrators

August 27: Community services; religious groups
Discussion of Chapters 11 and 12 in Riedel and Welsh.
The role of social institutions.

August 28: Panel Coordinating community efforts
Discussion of Chapter 13 in Riedel and Welsh.

August 29: 9 am to noon.
Student presentations, Exam.

Final papers due September 19.
Grading
Students will be graded on participation, examination and a final paper.

Students are expected to participate actively in each of the sessions and to keep a journal on their field experiences. Participation will count for 30% of your grade.

The examination will include two essays that may be prepared in advance but must be written in class and a section of objective questions in matching, multiple choice and short answer formats. The exam will count for 35% of your grade.

Your paper will explore a key issue in violence prevention or treatment as identified during the course. (For example, you might explore models for effective relationships between criminal justice and community organizations or programming to address a particular area of violent activity such as gang activity or intimate partner violence.) The paper will count for 35% of your grade.