

Reading List: 7 fascinating books on policing, violence and racism

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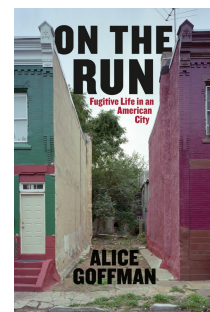
2014-8-18

As protests escalate over the shooting by police of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in the US state of Missouri, academics and researchers can turn to a wide body of literature on policing, protests, violence and racism. Here **Amy Mollett**, managing editor of LSE Review of Books, brings together a selection of book reviews on the topic.

Interested in the intersections of crime and race in the US?

On The Run: Fugitive Life in an American City by Alice Goffman

Tim Newburn is impressed by Alice Goffman's book *On The Run*: a look at the lives of the young African American men who are caught up in a web of warrants and surveillance in a neighbourhood in Philadelphia. As a work of ethnography it is outstanding. As a piece of social science it is refreshingly and gloriously readable –how often can one say that of sociology these days? And as an insight into the reach and effect of the contemporary penal state on the day-to-day lives of Black urban America it is unparalleled. [Read the full review.](#)

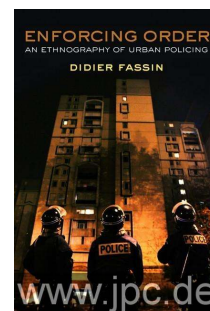


Find this book: 

Interested in policing and enforcement during riots in France?

Enforcing Order: An Ethnography of Urban Policing by Didier Fassin

During the time of the 2005 riots, Didier Fassin carried out an ethnographic study in one of the largest precincts in the Paris region, sharing the life of a police station and cruising with the patrols, in particular the dreaded anti-crime squads. This account of contemporary urban policing aims to show that, instead of enforcing the law, the police are engaged in the task of enforcing an unequal social order in the name of public security. *Enforcing Order* is an intriguing read, not least for what it reveals about the politics of law and order, and of policing, in France in recent times. It also offers interesting insights into French social science and criminology, writes Tim Newburn. [Read the full review.](#)

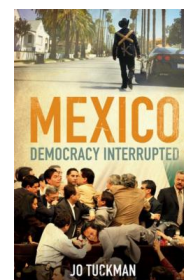


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Interested in democracy and policing in Mexico?

Mexico: Democracy Interrupted by Jo Tuckman

Political plurality in Mexico may now be firmly established and elections may be generally free and fair, but the country still has far from embraced full democratic transition, argues Jo Tuckman in her new book. Tom Gash finds that Tuckman is close enough to Mexican life that the stories she provides ring true and contain refreshing snippets of detail. A satisfying read, but light on detail about what lies ahead. [Read the full review.](#)



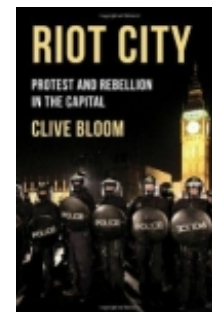
Find this book: 

Interested in the history of protest in London?

Riot City: Protest and Rebellion in the Capital by Clive Bloom

Since 2000, London has seen unprecedented levels of unrest. Its streets have become the battleground for a host of new demands and new ideological standpoints; its occupants, protesters and authority alike, have had to invent new tactics to cope with the pressure of street politics and advances in social media. Chris Gilson finds this book, which looks in detail at the story behind the capital's unrest, useful for those interested in the history of the city and of disorder and protest in general. [Read the full review.](#)

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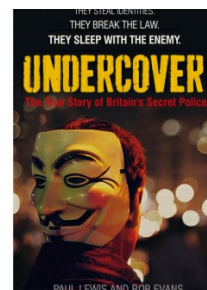


Interested in secret police operations?

Undercover: The True Story of Britain's Secret Police. Rob Evans and Paul Lewis

Undercover, written by Guardian journalists Rob Evans and Paul Lewis, aims to reveal the truth about secret police operations – the emotional turmoil, the psychological challenges and the human cost of a lifetime of deception – and asks whether such tactics can ever be justified. An important account of police cover-ups, finds Tim Newburn, with heavy implications for public trust in the police. [Read the full review.](#)

Find this book: 



Interested in the future of black politics?

Not in Our Lifetimes: The Future of Black Politics by Michael C. Dawson

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, polls revealed that only 20 per cent of African Americans believed that racial equality for blacks would be achieved in their lifetime. But following the election of Barack Obama, that number leaped to more than half. Did that dramatic shift in opinion really reflect a change in the vitality of black politics—and hope for improvement in the lives of African Americans? Tom A. Davies finds Michael C. Dawson's work highly readable and a book which should, at the very least, help stimulate the debate about the future direction of black politics and the continuing significance of race in American life. [Read the full review.](#)

Find this book 



Interested in the representation of African American family life in novels?

The Impact of Racism on African American Families: Literature as Social Science by Paul C. Rosenblatt

In focusing on what literature can tell us about various aspects of African American life, including housing, earnings, assets, unemployment, household violence, teen pregnancy and encounters with the criminal justice system, Paul C. Rosenblatt hopes to fill a gap in the existing literature. Engaging with novels written by African American authors, this book seeks to explore their rich depictions of African American family life, showing how these can contribute to our sociological knowledge and making the case for the novel as an object and source of social research. Janine Bradbury feels that Rosenblatt fails to open a true dialogue between disciplines in the ways that the likes of Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins and bell hooks have so expertly achieved. [Read the full review.](#)

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