Law Enforcement and the Opioid Crisis
a discussion with
Daniel Flannery Ph.D.
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March 9, 2018 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Dampeeer Room, 2nd Floor of Kelvin Smith Library

One of the more curious aspects about the horrors of the Opioid crisis has been how deaths from drug use became a medical and public health, rather than a law enforcement, issue. That may be partly explained by the fact that the crisis began with doctors being convinced to overprescribe legal opioids, leading to addiction of millions of patients. A cynic might say that pharmaceutical executives differ little from pushers save in all the social ways that matter. And perhaps the new group of opioid users does not quite fit the racial and ethnic stereotypes prevalent in the "war on drugs." It might even be related to social enlightenment about the public health benefits of a non-punitive approach, such as making antidotes more widely available.

But regardless of the sins of big companies, and the mistakes of physicians, at this point tens of thousands of people are dying each year from ingesting illegal heroin and fentanyl. The number of deaths from prescription drugs stabilized in 2011, but deaths from "illicit opioids" have tripled. And the people who sell those substances must know they are dangerous. Killing tens of thousands of people would seem to be a topic for law enforcement. "Drug wars" are notoriously unsuccessful but, given the stakes, winning this drug war seems especially important. Professor Flannery is leading a project on drug law enforcement and how it could be improved; he joins us to report on his research and the challenge.

The Friday Public Affairs Discussion Lunch is an opportunity for students, faculty, staff, emeriti and other members of our communities to learn and question each other about public policy issues at the international, national, and local levels. Faculty and other speakers share their research and experience to get beyond the headlines and repetition in the mass media, and the wild rumors of the internet. Lunch is brown bag, but cookies and some beverages are provided by the Center for Policy Studies of the College of Arts and Sciences.

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