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Fox to deliver Klein Lecture on school shootings



If campus shootings in the United States today were compared to those in past decades, the numbers would tell a story different from the panicky headlines and "giddy" minute-to-minute television reports that make the crimes seem more commonplace, says Lipman Family Professor James Alan Fox.

Fox, an internationally known criminologist, will talk about mass shootings on campuses in this year's Robert D. Klein University Lecture, "Making Sense of School/Campus Shootings: Policies, Practices and Prevention."

The lecture begins at 3 p.m. March 27 in 240 Egan.

Interim CJ dean to lead 'up and coming' college

Chester Britt arrived at Northeastern in summer 2006, the same week as President Joseph Aoun.

Hired as an associate professor in the College of Criminal Justice, Britt was lured from his department chairmanship at Arizona State by a college that's seen nationally as "up and coming" and a university whose direction he admires.



Boston students to convene on campus for Model UN

Nearly 150 Boston public school students will debate Kosovo's independence as members of the Boston Model United Nations Conference, to be held Friday on Northeastern's campus.

The students will gather in West Village F for opening ceremonies at 8 a.m., and hear from Walter Carrington, who served as ambassador to both Senegal and Nigeria and was Africa regional director of the Peace Corps.



In other news

- Jack McDevitt, associate dean of criminal justice, [pooh-poohs the theory](#) that iPods are behind a rise in violent crime.
- Music professor Judith Tick will [deliver the inaugural lecture](#) in a new Library of Congress series.

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James Alan Fox

Fox, an internationally known criminologist, will talk about mass shootings on campuses in this year's Robert D. Klein University Lecture, "Making Sense of School/Campus Shootings: Policies, Practices and Prevention." The lecture begins at 3 p.m. March 27 in 240 Egan.

He will contrast mass media portrayals of such shootings with the statistics, which show campus murders in the United States have remained relatively steady, at about 10 a year.

"We've had campus rampages in the '70s and '80s, but people forget about that because our telecommunications abilities weren't as sophisticated, and we didn't have the minute-to-minute coverage we have today," Fox said. "But then, as now, it's a very rare event. By comparison, about 1,000 students a year commit suicide."

He argues that panic-driven decisions and approaches by colleges — drills, plans of "lockdowns" and exploration of the use of metal detectors — are wrong. Instead, a "student-centeredness" should be at the foundation of campus and faculty planning, he said.

"A lot of student shooters are graduate students whose careers are on the line," Fox said. "If they have a grievance with a professor, and they can't get their dissertation approved, this could make or break them."

Fox cites the incessant reporting of the recent shootings at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois as being a part of the problem. "The news coverage of these events has been absolutely horrible. At one point, the press seemed almost giddy as the death toll rose," he said.

The coverage has not only heightened fear and paranoia on campuses, but has also triggered policies that veer toward the ridiculous, in Fox's estimation. "There's actually a campus out west that is training their faculty in marksmanship," and other universities are actively engaged in student profiling, he said.

The author of 16 books on topics including mass killings and violence prevention advised President Clinton on juvenile justice issues.

Fox was selected by the provost's office to deliver this year's lecture, an honor offered every year in remembrance of the late professor Klein, a

chair of mathematics and member of the Faculty Senate Agenda
Committee.

— Susan Salk

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Chester Britt

He said his new appointment as interim dean — following the resignation of longtime college leader Jack Greene, now vice provost for experiential education — means he can help "make sure the momentum Jack established can continue."

"I'm a true believer" in Northeastern, he said.

Britt — who holds a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona, and has taught at Penn State and the University of Illinois as well — has studied the demography of crime and criminal careers.

He has been the college's associate dean for undergraduate education, and is proud of the effective support structure for the nearly 900 undergraduates in criminal justice. But among the things Britt admired about most the college was its recent addition of a Ph.D. program, one of relatively few in the United States.

"A doctoral program is the way to attract faculty and ensure there's lots of research being done," he said.

And the job market remains solid for those with criminal justice doctorates, he said. Police departments adding research units are snapping up criminologists, he noted, and "there are always more positions" on criminal justice faculties "than people to fill them."

Despite the competition, he said he's been "impressed with the quality of faculty we've been able to recruit." He'll have a chance to put his own stamp on that effort, he said; he will serve as interim dean at least through June 2009, during which time the college plans to hire an assistant and two associate professors.

At many schools, he said, undergraduate criminology programs are filled with students looking for police jobs, "and there are jobs in that field."

"But Northeastern students are different," Britt said. "Because of the co-op program, they're more exposed to federal law enforcement — and those jobs are more attractive."

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Boston students prepare for their Model U.N. session. / COURTESY PHOTO

The students will gather in West Village F for opening ceremonies at 8 a.m., and hear from Walter Carrington, who served as ambassador to both Senegal and Nigeria and was Africa regional director of the Peace Corps.

The students will serve on various U.N.-style committees, working through Kosovo-related issues such as minority rights, the region's economic future, preservation of cultural sites and refugees.

Northeastern students have helped train the Boston pupils and will assist during Friday's debates.

Six of the Boston "ambassadors" will be named Urban Diplomats and will represent the city at a national Model United Nations Conference in New York later in the year.

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