
ARE PRISONS OBSOLETE?

Dr. S.M. Rodriguez
CRM/SOC 187

Summer II, June 27 - July 25, 2019

Distance Learning

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Scheduled, “virtual office” meetings welcome, via Skype or Google Hangouts

This course centers around the iconic text and ultimate question: *are prisons obsolete?* The class will focus on the history, growth and current functioning of the American system of incarceration with the critical goal of questioning the future of such carceral structures. While the course begins with the book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Davis and foundational sociological examinations, the texts for the course span several fields, including Gender Studies, Geography, History and Disability Studies.

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the course, students are expected to

- 1) Articulate the development of discipline, corrections and justice in the United States.
- 2) List the basic theoretical arguments for and against retributive sentencing.
- 3) Interrogate other criminal justice objectives, as well as alternative justice systems
- 4) Critically engage the idea of the criminal.
- 5) Evaluate mass incarceration, its timeline and effects on American society.

Work Requirement:

In this four-week, three-credit intensive course, you are agreeing to a minimum of 37.5 hours of engagement, or roughly 9.5 hours each week. By remaining in the class after receiving this syllabus, you are acknowledging that you understand that responsibility and have time in your personal schedule to offer this work. While students are responsible for reading, viewing and listening to many materials in a relatively short amount of time, I have carefully considered the 9.5-hour target while choosing the respective learning materials.

- Complete daily reading, listening, and viewing
- Upload weekly responses to Blackboard Discussion site
- Video Conference online once a week (at agreed upon hour)
- Learn terms, dates, people, and other elements that arise in readings and lectures.
- Write one final short essay, responding to the question of the class, using course materials and offered by your chosen, outside, data-driven sources

Grading:

Grading in this class will neither be punitive, nor subjective. Your aim is not to please me or preempt how I would like you to respond; it is merely to engage as an informed, critical and honest student. Therefore, grading in this class is based off of complete, on-time participation. You will receive a full point for each prompt and session that you engage with over the course before the deadline. However, your involvement must not be distracted or incomplete.

There will be **four virtual meetings; attendance for each is worth 1 point.** They will be scheduled according to the class' predetermined availability. Please fill out the survey on Assignments in Blackboard in order to enter your availability. **This must be done by Friday, June 28.**

There are five response essays due; the fifth of which has a prompt (that you can find at the end of the module description below). **Each of these five essays is worth 1 point.** The first four should follow the rubric that will be available on Blackboard. Every response essay is to be at least one single-spaced page, submitted directly on Blackboard as both a .doc attachment and copy and pasted into the Discussion Board.

This course requires one Additional Contribution response, worth 1 point, which can be a video or written response to the chosen media. Students may compose the response to any book, event, documentary or extended reading from the listing under "Module" (pgs. 5-6).

Students who, at the end of the session, have reached 10 points will receive an A.

NOTE:

Late responses will be accepted, but will earn up to .5, rather than a full point. There will be a half-point opportunity (or two) in this course for every student to seize.

There are no B+, C+, or D+ grades in this class.

There is also no rounding up final grades; one must reach the target in order to receive the grade (a full 9 earns an A-; a full 7 earns a B-, 7.5 does not earn a B, but rather a B-).

A = 10/10

A- = 9/10

B = 8/10

B- = 7/10

C = 6/10

C- = 5/10

D = 4/10

D- = 3/10

F = 0-2/10

Academic Honesty:

By enrolling in this course, you are agreeing to the following code of conduct. Any and all instances of plagiarism – intentional or not – will be penalized in this class.

Misunderstanding plagiarism will not be excusable in this course. You may read the following for definitions and guidelines to identify any possible infraction:

<http://www.accreditedschoolsonline.org/resources/preventing-plagiarism/>

Hofstra University Honor Code: “As a member of the Hofstra community I pledge to demonstrate integrity and ethical behavior in all aspects of my life, both inside and out of the classroom. I understand that I am accountable for everything I say and write. I will not misrepresent my academic work, nor will I give or receive unauthorized assistance for academic work. I agree to respect the rights of all members of the Hofstra community. I will be guided by the values expressed in the P.R.I.D.E Principles. I accept the responsibility to follow this Honor Code at all times.”

Deadlines and Grading Policies

University deadlines can be found here:

<http://www.hofstra.edu/studentaffairs/student-services/academic-records/academic-records-fall-2017-calendar.html>

Student Access Services (SAS):

Students with learning disabilities must inform me within the first week of class. If you believe you need accommodations for a disability, please contact for Student Access Services (SAS). In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against in any programs, or services available at Hofstra University.

Individuals with disabilities are entitled to accommodations designed to facilitate full access to all programs and services. SAS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will provide students with documented disabilities accommodation letters, as appropriate.

Please note that accommodations may require early planning and are not retroactive; please contact SSD as soon as possible. *All students are responsible for providing accommodation letters to each instructor and for discussing with them the specific accommodations needed and how they can be best implemented in each course.*

Student Policy Prohibiting Discriminatory Harassment, Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct

Hofstra prohibits sexual and other discriminatory harassment, stalking, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and other sexual misconduct (collectively, “Gender Based Offenses”). If you or someone you know believes they have been subjected to any of these Gender Based Offenses, help is available. To make a report, please contact the Title IX Coordinator at (516) 463-5841 or TitleIXCoordinator@hofstra.edu.

Notices:

- For this course, you are allowed to receive information at your own pace and in a space that feels comfortable, safe and private. This is a luxury that online courses afford students who have traumatic histories (with sexual/carceral/gun violence or war) and who may suffer various anxiety-related disorders as a result. I believe that **content warnings** are a very important way to minimize re-traumatization and provide an equitable learning experience to those of us who do battle post-traumatic stress. Therefore, for any live session, I will practice delivering content warnings and ask that each student who participates in the session does as well. Regarding posted materials, however, I will make the note here that given the topic of the course – prisons and incarceration – **violence will be a regular subject. Sexual assault and non-sexual physical violence will be spoken or written about each week.** Every student is encouraged to do what is needed to take care of your emotional state while reading and viewing. This may look like taking breaks, being alone or* asking a close friend whose presence is comforting to stay nearby. It also may look like drinking water, meditating, or interspersing your session with cat videos. Please know that I understand if something is hard to get through and do not hesitate to tell me if that is so. However, with that being said, difficulty of the subject material will not excuse any student from participating with the course. I have designed it so that you can still achieve 10 points even if you have to disengage with one reading or film, but you cannot opt out of the learning experience in any significant way. **Please take this note into consideration** before subjecting yourself to the potentially harmful stories/images of this course.
- Readings are subject to change, but any mandatory reading on this list will be eligible for additional contribution if no longer a requirement. You are welcome to go at your own pace and read ahead.
- You are responsible for checking Blackboard and your Hofstra email address regularly for any announcements.

MODULE

Week I: June 27 – July 4 (Response Essays due July 6 on Discussion Board)

- Section 1: The History of the Prison
 - L1 - Welcome to Class/Introductory Lecture (Blackboard)
 - [Discipline and Punish](#) by Michel Foucault
 - Are Prisons Obsolete? (APO): Chapters 1, 2 and 3
 - Film: [Eastern State Penitentiary](#) (Must log in through Hofstra Library)
- Section 2: Prison Violence
 - Film: [Rikers: An American Jail](#) (Must log in through Hofstra Library)
 - Deirdre Caputo-Levine, The yard face: The contributions of inmate interpersonal violence to the carceral habitus
 - [#CloseRikers](#) Panel Discussion
 - [How Driving on a Suspended License Turned to 20 Years](#) (**optional** - first 10 minutes)

Options for Additional Contribution

Video: [Dean Spade and Tourmaline \(FKA Reina\) Gossett Discuss Violence](#)

Audio Documentary: [Prisons on Fire: George Jackson, Attica and Black Liberation](#)

Readings: *Caleb Smith, The Prison and the American Imagination (2011) ISBN-10: 0300171498* or *Tara Herivel and Paul Wright, Prison Nation (E-Book Available for Free [via Hofstra Library](#))*

Week II: July 4 – 11 (Response due July 11 on Discussion Board)

- Section 1: The Racial & Gender Politics of Prison
 - APO Chapter 4
 - [Race, Racism and the Carceral State](#)
 - Julia C. Oparah, Feminism and the (Trans)gender entrapment of gender nonconforming prisoners
 - Kali Gross, African American Women, Mass Incarceration, and the Politics of Protection (**optional**)
- Section 2: Disability, Medicalization and Mental Health
 - Laura Appleman, Deviancy, Dependency and Disability: The Forgotten History of Eugenics and Mass Incarceration (436-460)

Options for Additional Contribution:

Readings: Sexton et al., [Where the Margins Meet: A demographic assessment of transgender inmates in men's prisons](#)

Emily Thuma, All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing and the Feminist Fight to End Violence (2019) E-Book ISBN: 978-0-252-05117-3

Film: 13th (Netflix)

Week III: July 11 – 18 (Response due July 18 on Discussion Board)

- Section 1: Geography of Prisons
 - Stephen Young & Bryan Pitman, [Land of Extraction: How the Carceral Institution Settled in Central Appalachia](#)
 - Jamie Peck, Geography and public policy: mapping the penal state
 - Film: [The Prison in Twelve Landscapes](#)
- Section 2: Prison Economies
 - APO Chapter 5
 - Frederick Douglass, [The Convict Lease System](#), Library of Congress
 - [Gladiator School](#)

Options for Additional Contribution:

EVENTS: [Broken Windows: Art Show Closing Reception Brooklyn NY July 12th](#)
[Life After Incarceration, NYC July 18](#) **RSVP Req'd!!**

Reading: Judah Schept, *Progressive Punishment* (2015) (E-Book Available for Free [via Hofstra Library](#))
ISBN-10: 1479808776 ISBN-13: 978-1479808779

Week IV July 18 – 25 (Response due July 25 on Discussion Board)

- Section 1: Indigenous Justice Ethics
 - Mecke Nagel, Ubuntu Ethics
 - Gilbert and Settles, [The Next Step: Indigenous Development of Neighborhood-Restorative Community](#)
 - Gray and Lauderdale, *The Great Circle of Justice: North American Indigenous Justice and Contemporary Restoration Programs*, 2007
- Section 2: Alternatives to Incarceration/Punishment
 - APO Chapter 6
 - Short Film: [Shadow Boxing: A Chicana's Journey from Vigilante Violence to Transformative Justice \(c/w: childhood sexual assault\)](#)
 - Toward Transformative Justice: A Liberatory Approach to Child Sexual Abuse and other forms of Intimate and Community Violence (pgs. 5-31)
 - CR10 Publications Collective, *Abolition Now: Ten Years of Strategy and Struggle Against the Prison Industrial Complex* (pgs. 137-156).
- Section 3: Imagining
 - Lena Palacios, [With Immediate Cause](#)
 - [I Use My Love to Guide Me](#)

Final Essay Prompt (due July 25): If it were announced that all prisons were to be shut down in our country in the next 2 years, what institutions would you invest in and/or create to accomplish what prisons have not? Support your proposal with research-based evidence of need and/or effectiveness.