

**POLI 4113 WDE**  
**The Politics of Incarceration and Prison Abolition**  
**Winter 2021**

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Course Description

In a system of discipline, the child is more individualized than the adult, the patient more than the healthy man, the madman and the delinquent more than the normal and the non-delinquent. In each case, it is towards the first of these pairs that all the individualizing mechanisms are turned in our civilization; and when one wishes to individualize the healthy, normal and law-abiding adult, it is always by asking him how much of the child he has in him, what secret madness lies within him, what fundamental crime he has dreamt of committing.

-- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.

Who qualifies as a criminal? What function does prison serve? The passage quoted above, from one of the most prominent historians and philosophers of power and the prison, describes the way our ideas of criminality tend to apply to under-developed or ‘abnormal’ classes of people like children, the sick, and the ‘mentally ill’. By contrast, the healthy and sane adult is identified as the ‘normal’ and therefore lawful person. But how (or better yet: why?) do we decide that certain groups of people are normal, and others ought to be placed in an institutional site of control, discipline, and rehabilitation such as the school, the clinic, the asylum, and the prison? Prison, we shall see, is not the only form of imprisonment. In this course, we will be introduced to the idea of the prison – its conceptual and historical origins, and debates over its function as an institution of both justice and injustice. We will also explore how the prison is connected to other sites of power and coercion. Through a series of interdisciplinary and intersectional readings, students will be introduced to the ways in which structures of power related to class, gender, sexuality, nationality, and ability play a role in our conceptions of criminality. Students will engage with recent debates over the disproportionate levels of incarceration among black and Indigenous peoples, the treatment of peoples with cognitive disabilities, the ideas of the ‘school to prison pipeline’, the criminalization of migrants, the ‘prison industrial complex’, and arguments for the abolition of prisons.

**1. Required Texts**

There are no required texts in this course. All materials will be available through the Lakehead library system and/or have been uploaded to D2L/course link under “Content”.

## 2. Course Requirements

1. **Participation and Attendance (30%):** Participants who attend and participate have an opportunity to earn up to 30% for their time and effort. (With 14 classes, this ends up being roughly 2% per class.)
2. **Presentation (30%):** Participants will give a presentation 15 to 20-minute presentation for one or two of the weekly readings. Presenters should summarize the main points of the work(s) they choose and provide their critical interpretation of the arguments and evidence offered in the work(s). Presenter should also prepare three questions for the class to discuss.

You choose to do a deep dive into one reading, or a more general reading of two or more of the readings.

Please email you presentation slides and/or material to me so that I may disturbed the to the class prior to your presentation.

Presentation sign-up will be conducted in our first class on January 11<sup>th</sup>.

3. **Short Paper I (20%):** 5 to 6-page essay (approx. 1,500 words). You can choose whatever topic you like so long as it deals with the themes covered in the course. Please email me with your topic idea. I will provide some guidance and a marking rubric to help students write a great paper. This paper is **due on February 12, 2021**.
4. **Short Paper II (20%):** 5 to 6-page essay (approx. 1,500 words). You can choose whatever topic you like so long as it is not the same as the first paper and deals with the themes covered in the course. Please email me with your topic idea. I will provide some guidance and a marking rubric to help students write a great paper. This paper is **due on April 12, 2021**.

## 3. E-mail

E-mail will be answered within two business days.

I welcome e-mail queries and comments. All students are required to have a valid Lakehead e-mail address. It is your responsibility to maintain your e-mail address in good working order. The University expects you to correspond with me through your official e-mail address, and not through a commercial e-mail account.

Failure to receive important class announcements and messages from me because of a faulty e-mail account (for example, an account which screens out my e-mails as junk mail; bounced messages because of overloaded caches) are not legitimate excuses.

Forwarding your Lakehead email to a Hotmail, Gmail, Yahoo or other type of e-mail account is not advisable. In some cases, messages from your Lakehead addresses sent to Hotmail, Gmail or Yahoo accounts are filtered as junk mail, which means that e-mails from me may end up in your spam or junk mail folder.

#### **4. Accessibility**

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me, and/or Accessibility Services. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

#### **5. Essays**

You are to complete two essays, one in first section, and one in the second. The goal of each essay is to provide a clear, concise response (argument) to the research question backed by rational consideration of the evidence.

Summarize your response (argument) in a sentence or two – the thesis statement – and appear in the first paragraph of your essay. Be explicit. The reader should be clear on what you are arguing. Assume an educated reader. Do not spend more than a few paragraphs providing background information. Focus on providing information that advances your argument. While the balance of the paper will defend your argument, you should also acknowledge counterarguments and seek to demonstrate that your argument is superior.

#### **6. Formatting bibliographies, references**

You can use whatever citation style you prefer in your paper and presentation.

The written assignments should all be double-spaced in 12pt Times New Roman font with standard margins. Essays should be free of spelling and grammatical errors. They must include appropriate citations and complete bibliography.

Include a title page with your name, the date, the course number, and my name.

In completing the written assignments, students must cite all facts and figures that are not common knowledge and must cite all ideas that are borrowed from other authors. Students must use a recognized standard format correctly in their bibliographies, references, and footnotes. Failure to do so will result in a penalty in calculating your assignment grade.

The University takes instructional offences (including plagiarism) very seriously. Please make sure that you are familiar with the regulations regarding instructional offences. Also, it is not acceptable to submit the same assignment in two different courses.

#### **7. Late Penalties**

Assignments are due on the dates specified in the course outline. Late papers will be subject to a penalty of 2% a day including weekends. Assignments will not be accepted two weeks after the due date. If you require an extension or accommodation, please email me.

## 8. Course Schedule

1. Numbered readings are required readings.
- Bullet pointed readings are only recommended readings for your own interest. You may wish to consult these when doing your written assignments.

### **Week 1 (January 11) – Introductions**

Introductions  
Course syllabus  
Question and Answer

### **Week 2 (January 18) – The Birth of the Prison**

1. George Herbert Mead. 1918. "The Psychology of Punitive Justice," *The American Journal of Sociology* 23(5): 577-602.
  2. Christopher Adamson. 1983. "Punishment After Slavery, 1865-1890," *Social Problems* 30(5): 555-569.
  3. Maynard, R. 2020. "Police Abolition/Black Revolt," *Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* 41: 70-78.
- H.L.A. Hart. 1968. "Prolegomenon to the Principles of Punishment" in *Punishment and Responsibility*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1-27.
  - Hinds, L. 2005. "Crime control in Western countries, 1970 to 2000," in *The New Punitiveness: Trends Theories, Perspectives*. John Pratt, Eds. Willan Publishing: 47-65.

### **Week 3 (January 25) The Carceral State**

1. Loic Wacquant. 2002. "From Slavery to Mass Incarceration," *New Left Review* 13: 41-60.
  2. Vesla Weaver and Amy Lerman. 2010. "Political Consequences of the Carceral State," *American Political Science Review* 104(4): 817-833.
  3. Meyer, J. and O'Malley, P., 2005. "Missing the Punitive Turn? Canadian Criminal Justice, 'Balance', and Penal Modernism," in *The New Punitiveness: Trends, Theories, Perspectives*. J Pratt, D Brown, S Hallsworth, M Brown & W Morrison, eds. Willan, 201-217.
- Katherine Beckett and Naomi Murakawa. 2012. "Mapping the shadow carceral state: Toward an institutionally capacious approach to punishment," *Theoretical Criminology* 16: 221-244.
  - Edward J. Escobar. 2015. "The Unintended Consequences of the Carceral State: Chicana/o Political Mobilization in Post-World War II America," *Journal of American History* 102(1): 174-84.
  - Dolovich, S., 2011. "Exclusion and control in the carceral state," *Berkeley Journal of Criminal Law* 16: 259-339.

#### **Week 4 (February 1) – Race**

1. Pettit, B. and Western, B., 2004. "Mass imprisonment and the life course: Race and class inequality in US incarceration," *American Sociological Review* 69(2): 151-169.
  2. Lisa Marie Cacho. 2014. "The Presumption of White Innocence," *American Quarterly* 66(4): 1085-1090.
  3. Nikhil Pal Singh. 2014. "The Whiteness of Police," *American Quarterly* 66(4): 1091-1099.
- Sexton, J. and Lee, E. 2006. "Figuring the Prison: Prerequisites of Torture at Abu Ghraib," *Antipode* 38(5): 1005-1022.
  - Robert Chase. 2015. "We Are Not Slaves: Rethinking the Rise of Carceral States through the Lens of the Prisoners' Rights Movement," *The Journal of American History* 102(10): 73-86.
  - Sudbury, J., 2014. "Global lockdown: Race, gender, and the prison-industrial complex," New York: Routledge.

#### **Week 5 (February 8) Immigration and Refugees**

1. Fassin, D., 2011. "Policing Borders, Producing Boundaries. The Governmentality of Immigration in Dark Times," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40: 213-226.
  2. Kilgore, James. 2015. "The War on Immigrants," in *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A Peoples Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggles of Our Time*. The New Press: 73-90.
  3. Paik, Naomi A. 2017. "Abolitionist Futures and the US Sanctuary Movement," *Race & Class* 59(2), 3-25.
- Garcia Hernandez, C. 2017. "Abolishing immigration prisons," *Boston University Law Review*, 97(1): 245-300.

#### **Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup>: First Paper Due**

#### **Week 6 (February 15) Break/Reading Week - No Classes**

#### **Week 7 (February 22) – Class and Poverty**

1. DeVerteuil, G., May, J. and Von Mahs, J., 2009. "Complexity not collapse: recasting the geographies of homelessness in a 'punitive' age," *Progress in Human Geography* 33(5): 646-666.
2. Julilly Kohler-Hausmann. 2010. "The Attila the Hun Law": New York's Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Making of a Punitive State," *Journal of Social History* 44(1): 71-95.
3. Donna Murch. 2016. "Paying for Punishment: The New Debtors' Prison," *Boston Review*. <http://bostonreview.net/editors-picks-us/donna-murch-paying-punishment>

### **Week 8 (March 1) – The Neoliberal Prison**

1. Wacquant, L., 2001. "The Penalisation of Poverty and the Rise of Neo-liberalism," *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research* 9(4): 401-412.
2. Kilgore, James. 2015. "Private Prisons," in *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A Peoples Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggles of Our Time*. The New Press: 167-182.
3. Kilgore, James. 2015. "Incarceration Inc.," in *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A Peoples Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggles of Our Time*. The New Press: 183-196.

### **Week 9 (March 8) – Gender and Carceral Feminism**

1. 2006. "Gender Violence and the Prison Industrial Complex" in *Color of Violence: The Incite! Anthology*. South End Press: Cambridge, 223-226.
  2. Thuma, Emily. 2015. "Lessons in Self-Defense: Gender Violence, Racial Criminalization, & Anticarceral Feminism," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 43(3-4): 52-71.
  3. Carlen, P., 2002. "Carceral clawback: the case of women's imprisonment in Canada," *Punishment and Society* 4(1): 115-122.
- Jacklyn Huey and Michael Lynch. 2005. "The Image of Black Women in Criminology: Historical Stereotypes as Theoretical Foundation," in *Race, Crime, and Justice: A Reader*. Shaun Gabbidon and Helen Taylor Greene, eds. New York: Routledge, 127-140.

### **Week 10 (March 15) – LGBTQ**

1. Vitulli, E.W., 2013. "Queering the Carceral Intersecting Queer/Trans Studies and Critical Prison Studies," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19(1): 111-123.
  2. Stanley, E.A., Spade, D. and Justice, Q.I., 2012. "Queering Prison Abolition, Now?" *American Quarterly* 64(1): 115-127.
  3. Julia Oparah. 2012. "Feminism and the (Trans)Gender Entrapment of Gender Nonconforming Prisoners," *UCLA Women's Law Journal* 18(2): 239-271.
- Ben-Moshe, L., Che Gossett, Nick Mitchell, and Eric A. Stanley. 2015. "Critical Theory, Queer Resistance, and the Ends of Capture," in *Death and Other Penalties: Philosophy in a Time of Mass Incarceration*. Eds. Geoffrey Adelsberg, Lisa Guenther, and Scott Zeman. Fordham University Press: 266-295.

## **MARCH 12: FINAL DAY TO WITHDRAW**

### **Week 11 (March 22) – Disability**

1. Donald Specter. 1994. "Cruel and Unusual Punishment of the Mentally Ill in California's Prisons: A Case Study of a Class Action Suit," *Social Justice* 21(3): 109-116.
2. Ben-Moshe, L., 2013. "Disabling incarceration: Connecting disability to divergent confinements in the USA," *Critical Sociology* 39(3): 385-403.

3. Harold Braswell. 2014. "Why do police keep seeing a person's disability as a provocation?" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/08/25/people-with-mental-disabilities-get-the-worst-and-least-recognized-treatment-from-police/>
4. Toshio Meronek. 2013. "The Invisible Punishment of Prisoners With Disabilities" <http://www.thenation.com/article/175404/invisible-punishment-prisoners-disabilities>

### **Week 12 (March 29) Children and Juvenile Justice**

1. Goldson, B. 2005. "Child Imprisonment: A Case for Abolition," *Youth Justice*, 5(2): 77-90.
  2. Meiners, E.R. 2011. "Ending the school-to-prison pipeline/building abolition futures," *The Urban Review* 43(4): 547-565.
  3. Ofer, Udi. 2011. "Criminalizing the Classroom: The Rise of Aggressive Policing and Zero Tolerance Discipline in New York City Public Schools," *New York Law School Law Review* 56: 1373-1411.
- Nell Bernstein. 2016. "Against Reform: Beyond the Juvenile Prison," In *Burning Down the House: The End of Juvenile Prison*. The New Press: 307-319.
  - Anthony Platt. 1969. "The Rise of the Child-Saving Movement: A Study in Social Policy and Correctional Reform," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 381: 21-38.

### **Week 13 (April 5) – Easter Monday – NO CLASS**

### **Week 14 (April 12): Decolonization and Abolition**

1. Rob Nichols. 2014. "The colonialism of incarceration," *Radical Philosophy Review* 17(2): 435-455.
  2. Angela Davis, "Chapter 6: Abolitionist Alternative," in *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 105-115.
  3. *Manifesto for Abolition: A Journal of Insurgent Politics*, <https://abolitionjournal.org/frontpage/>
- Ruth Wilson Gilmore. 2015. "The Worrying State of the Anti-Prison Movement," *Social Justice Journal*. <http://www.socialjusticejournal.org/the-worrying-state-of-the-anti-prison-movement/>
  - José Martín – "Policing is a Dirty Job, But Nobody's Gotta Do It: 6 Ideas for a Cop-Free World" <http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/policing-is-a-dirty-job-but-nobodys-gotta-do-it-6-ideas-for-a-cop-free-world-20141216>
  - Kilgore, James. 2015. "Organizing an End to Mass Incarceration," in *Understanding Mass Incarceration: A Peoples Guide to the Key Civil Rights Struggles of Our Time*. The New Press: 219-234.

*Second Paper Due*