

ANGOLA TO OZ: WRITING ON PRISON WRITING

First Year Seminar (UNIV 197SA)

DePauw University
MWF 12:30-1:30 p.m.
Fall 2012

Professor Rebecca Bordt
Office: 332 Asbury Hall
Office phone: 658-4521
Home phone: 653-1328
Office hours: MW 1:30-3 p.m. (or by appt.)
rbordt@depauw.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Lock-Up. Shawshank Redemption. Prison Break. Oz. America's Hardest Prisons. Seemingly, Americans have an obsession with the "reality" of prison life. But how accurate and representative are media depictions that we access on our laptops and televisions? This seminar will explore this question by analyzing what convicts actually say about their experiences. We will do this by reading, writing about, and discussing contemporary writings of prisoners in the United States. Prison life writing is a distinct genre of literature that takes a variety of forms: autobiography, memoir, poetry, letter writing, novels, and journalism. This body of writing is variously and interchangeably referred to as prison literature, convict literature, prison narrative, and, simply, prison writing. Regardless of the specific terminology, prison life writing refers to the writing prisoners do during their incarceration *about their prison experience*.

We will begin by considering why people who are incarcerated write. Is it simply a way of passing time? Do they find it therapeutic? Is it a political act? Is it art? Is it a path toward redemption? Next we will examine closely four forms of prison writing: nonfiction narratives, letter writing, fiction, journalism, and writ writing. What do convict authors actually say about their prison experience? And, finally, we will compare the picture they paint with the version of prison life that we get from mainstream media. Are they the same? What do we learn from prisoners' unique perspective? Along the way, we will pause to tour a prison, correspond with a convict author, and collaborate with writers in a women's prison.

COURSE GOALS

By the end of the semester you should be able to do the following: 1) identify the range of forms and the diversity in perspectives presented in prison life writing; 2) compare the perspectives of the incarcerated and with representations of prison popular media; 3) understand the importance of reading a text closely; 4) articulate an argument and substantiate it with empirical evidence (both orally and in writing); 5) recognize the complexity of our social world (including prisons) and the value of diverse perspectives; and 6) learn how to be a successful college student academically.

The specific writing goals for all First Year Seminars at DePauw are as follows:

- understand the uses of writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating;
- possess flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading;
- understand how readers perceive and respond to different forms of writing;
- understand a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, synthesizing, and acknowledging appropriate primary and secondary sources;
- understand the collaborative and social aspects of the writing processes.

I know. This is a very tall order! Please remember that we will be working on these together and you are not expected to have them mastered by the first day.

REQUIRED READINGS

A. The following books are available at the university bookstore and on-line.

Braly, Malcolm. 1967. *On the Yard*. NY: New York Review of Books.

Carceral, K.C. 2004. *Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison*. Belmont, CA: Cengage Learning.

Gordon, Robert. 2000. *Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison*. Pullmna, WA: Washington State University Press.

Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. *They Say/I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing*, 2nd edition. NY: W.W. Norton.

Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. 2012. *A Pocket Style Manual*, 6th edition. Bedford, MA: St. Martin's.

Jackson, George. 1994. *Soledad: The Prison Letters of George Jackson*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.

B. Additional required readings are available on Moodle.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Writing assignments. There are 6 writing assignments over the course of the semester of various length and importance. We will use class time to write, peer edit, and talk about the process of writing. Details on the writing assignments will be distributed in class.

Paper 1 (2 pages)

Paper 2 (5 pages)

Paper 3 (5 pages)

Paper 4 (1-2 pages)

Paper 5 (6-8 pages)

Paper 6 (1 page)

Class participation. You are expected to come to each class session having read and thought about the assigned readings. You are also expected to actively participate in class discussions. At times I will assign individuals to lead discussion. [See Appendix A for more details about my expectations.]

Women's prison book project. You will be paired with a student in Professor Kelsey Kauffman's writing class at Rockville Correctional Facility and will work with the student on producing a book for her child.

Final exam. There will be a comprehensive final exam on December 10, 2012.

COURSE POLICIES

How grades are calculated. Grades will be determined using the following point and percentage system. In order to pass the course, students must complete all of the assignments.

Writing assignment 1: required but not graded

Writing assignment 2: 50 points

Writing assignment 3: 50 points

Writing assignment 4: 25 points

Writing assignment 5: 75 points

Writing assignment 6: 25 points

Class participation (1st half) 25 points

Class participation (2nd half) 25 points

Final exam 50 points

Book project 25 points

Total	350 points
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Final grade: 90% and above = A-, A
80-89% = B-, B, B+
70-79% = C-, C, C+
60-69% = D
59% and below = F

What Letter Grades Mean.

A = Work that goes beyond the requirements of the assignment by adding new insight, creativity and/or particularly thoughtful analysis. Demonstrates a comprehensive command of the course material, an exceptional ability to apply concepts to the real world, and a superior ability to organize and express ideas.

B = Work that meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates a solid command of the course material, an ability to apply concepts to the real world, and good organization and expression of ideas.

C = Work that partially meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates acceptable command of the course material, a basic ability to apply concepts to the real world with some gaps and problems, and moderate skill in the organization and expression of ideas.

D = Work that marginally meets the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates little command of the course material, minimal attempt to apply concepts to the real world, and limited ability to organize and express ideas.

F = Work that does not meet the requirements of the assignment. Demonstrates no command of the course material, unable to appropriately or consistently apply concepts to the real world, and insufficiently organizes and expresses ideas.

Late Work/Make-up Work. All assignments are due in class on the dates indicated on the syllabus. Exceptions will be made if I receive in advance an official notification that you will be off campus on university business (e.g., athletic event) or a call from you prior to the due date indicating that you are gravely ill. Out of fairness to the entire class, no exceptions will be made (this includes minor illness, job interviews, weddings, delayed planes, etc.) Unexcused late assignments will be penalized one-half a letter grade for every 24 hour period in which they are late. For both excused and unexcused absences from class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed from your peers.

Extra Credit. None. No exceptions.

Security Measures. Due to past experience, I ask that you keep copies (hard-copies and on disk) of your assignments before handing them in. In addition, if you are turning in your work late, do not put it in my mailbox or under my office door. It is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements to give me your late work in person.

Honor Code. As with all courses at DePauw University, you are bound by the policy on academic integrity. We will be reading and discussing the policy in class. Please read the policy now on your own: <http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/student/acadlife/app/aip/dishonesty/> Also note that academic dishonesty includes the following: cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism, multiple submissions, abuse of academic material, deception and misrepresentation, electronic dishonesty, and carelessness. Each of these violations is described in detail in the Student Handbook. See me if you have any questions about your obligation to uphold this policy. While I encourage you to work together in small groups and discuss the course material among yourselves outside of class, papers and exams should be written without collaboration and should reflect your independent ideas.

Special Accommodations. According to Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, “DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and University administered activities and reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA). Accommodations are determined on a case by case basis. Any student who feels she or he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge is strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located at 101 E. Seminary St., [765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267). It is the responsibility of the student to share the letter of accommodation with faculty and staff members. Accommodations will not be implemented until the faculty or staff member has received the official letter. Accommodations are not retroactive. It is the responsibility of the student to discuss implementation of accommodations with each faculty and staff member receiving the letter.”

Laptops. Because this is a discussion based class, I would prefer that you not use your laptops in class. This means that you will need to make hardcopies of the readings posted on Moodle and/or bring in notes from the reading.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The books you have been asked to purchase are identified with an asterisk (*). All other citations can be found on Moodle.

<p>WEEK 1 August 22, 24</p>	<p>Prisons 101</p> <p>W: Introduction to the course. Get Paper 1 assignment</p> <p>F: Reid, Sue Titus. 2012. "The Confinement of Offenders," Pp. 505-536 in <i>Crime and Criminology</i>. NY: Oxford University Press. (Moodle)</p> <p>Paper 1 due</p>
<p>WEEK 2 August 27, 29, 31</p>	<p>M: *Gordon, Robert Ellis. 2000. <i>The Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison</i>. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, pp. xxi-37. *Lipson, Charles. 2008. <i>Doing Honest Work in College</i>, 2nd edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 3-53.</p> <p>W: *Gordon, Robert Ellis. 2000. <i>The Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison</i>. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, pp. 39-72. * Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. <i>They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing</i>, 2nd edition. NY: WW Norton, pp. 141-144.</p> <p>F: *Gordon, Robert Ellis. 2000. <i>The Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison</i>. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, pp. 73-108. *Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. <i>They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing</i>, 2nd edition. NY: WW Norton, pp. xiii-15 Get Paper 2a assignment</p>

<p>WEEK 3 September 3, 5, 7</p>	<p>Why Prisoners Write</p> <p>M: Chevigny, Bell Gale. 2005. ““All I Have, a Lament and a Boast””: Why Prisoners Write,” pp. 246-271. (Moodle)</p> <p>Graff, Gerald and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. <i>They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing</i>, 2nd edition. NY: WW Norton, pp. 19-51. Paper 2a due in class (bring 2 copies)</p> <p>W: Gaucher, Bob. 2002. “Inside Looking Out: Writers in Prison,” Pp. 33-49 in <i>Writing as Resistance</i>. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, edited by Bob Gaucher. (Moodle)</p> <p>F: Huckelbury, Jr., Charles. 2002. “Writing on the Walls: It Isn’t Just Graffiti,” Pp. 50-57 in <i>Writing as Resistance</i>. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, edited by Bob Gaucher. (Moodle)</p> <p>Get paper 2b assignment</p>
<p>WEEK 4 September 10, 12, 14</p>	<p>M: *<i>They Say I Say: The Moves that Matter in Academic Writing</i>, 2nd edition. NY: WW Norton, pp. 55-101.</p> <p>W: Hassine, Victor. 2002. “Letter to Joanna,” Pp. 58-63 in <i>Writing as Resistance</i>. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, edited by Bob Gaucher. (Moodle)</p> <p>F: McMaster, Gregory. 2002. “Maximum Ink,” Pp. 64-70 in <i>Writing as Resistance</i>. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, edited by Bob Gaucher. Paper 2b revision/extension due in class</p>

<p>WEEK 5 September 17, 19, 21</p>	<p>Nonfiction Narratives</p> <p>M: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. xi-38. Get Paper 3 assignment</p> <p>W: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 39-88.</p> <p>F: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 89-125.</p>
<p>WEEK 6 September 24, 26, 28</p>	<p>M: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 127-151. Paper 3 due in class (bring 2 copies)</p> <p>W: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 152-174. Paper 3 revision due</p> <p>F: *Carceral, K.C. 2004. <i>Behind a Convict's Eyes: Doing Time in a Modern Prison</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. xi-177-189.</p>
<p>WEEK 7 October 1, 3, 5</p>	<p>Letter Writing</p> <p>M: *Jackson, George. 1994. <i>Soledad: The Prison Letters of George Jackson</i>. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, pp. ix-33.</p> <p>W: *Jackson, George. 1994. <i>Soledad: The Prison Letters of George Jackson</i>. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, pp. 37-76.</p> <p>F: *Jackson, George. 1994. <i>Soledad: The Prison Letters of George Jackson</i>. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, pp. 206-266.</p>

<p>WEEK 8 October 8, 10, 12</p>	<p>M: Film, “What I Want My Words to Do to You.” [Letters written by women?] Paper 3 due in class; Get Paper 4 assignment</p> <p>W: [Letters written by women?] Paper 4 assignment due</p> <p>F: Trip to Rockville for discussion and to meet book partner</p>
<p>WEEK 9 October 15, 17, 19</p>	<p>Fall break</p>
<p>WEEK 10 October 22, 24, 26</p>	<p>Fiction</p> <p>M: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. vii-52. Get Paper 5 assignment</p> <p>W: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. 53-114. Hacker, Diana and Nancy Sommers. 2012. <i>A Pocket Style Manual</i>, 6th edition. Boston: St. Martin’s, pp. 88-103.</p> <p>F: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. 115-148. 1 paragraph research theme due in class</p> <p>Last day to withdraw from classes—October 26</p>
<p>WEEK 11 October 29, 31, November 2</p>	<p>M: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. 149-216. Bibliography due in class</p> <p>W: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. 217-273.</p> <p>F: *Braly, Malcolm. 1967. <i>On the Yard</i>. NY: New York Review Books, pp. 274-348.</p>

<p>WEEK 12 November 5, 7, 9</p>	<p>Journalism</p> <p>M: Morris, James McGrath. 2002. <i>Jailhouse Journalism</i>. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, pp. 5-18; 187-196.</p> <p>W: <i>The Angolite</i>, 2004. Volume 29, issue 4/5 (Skim) (Moodle) <i>The Cell Door</i> http://www.lairdcarlson.com/celldoor/01101/ (Skim)</p> <p>F: Wright, Paul. 2002. “The History of <i>Prison Legal News</i>: The Samizdat of the American Gulag,” Pp. 80-89 in <i>Writing as Resistance</i>. Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, edited by Bob Gaucher. (Moodle) <i>Prison Legal News</i>, July 2012, volume 23, issue 7. https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/includes/_public/_issues/pln_2012/07/pln12.pdf (Skim)</p>
<p>WEEK 13 November 12, 14, 16</p>	<p>M: Paper 5 draft due in class. Get Paper 6 assignment. Bring laptops to class</p> <p>W: No class (RB at conference)</p> <p>F: No class (RB at conference)</p>
<p>WEEK 14 November 19, 21, 23</p>	<p>M: Work on Paper 6 in class. Bring laptops to class</p> <p>W: No class (Thanksgiving break)</p> <p>F: No class (Thanksgiving break)</p>
<p>WEEK 15 November 26, 28, 30</p>	<p>M: Paper 6 due in class; Meeting with Rockville women about book project</p> <p>Writ Writing</p> <p>W: Belbot, Barbara and Craig Hemmens. 2010. <i>The Legal Rights of the Convicted</i>. El Paso, TX: LFB Scholarly Publishing, pp. 137-161.</p> <p>F: Film, “Writ Writer.” Paper 5 revision due in class</p>

WEEK 16 December 3, 5, 7	M: Discuss film from Monday W: In-class working session on book projects F: Semester Wrap-up
FINAL EXAM WEEK	Final exam, Monday, December 10, 8:30-11:30

APPENDIX A CLASS PARTICIPATION

Expectations

An important component of this class is discussion. There are different kinds of contributions you can make to discussion, all of which you are expected to work on over the course of the semester. None of these are possible without coming to class each session having read the assigned readings:

1. Attentively listening to your colleagues, in order to build on what has already been said;
2. Asking colleagues to clarify unclear contributions;
3. Summarizing key ideas that have emerged during the discussion;
4. Articulating an answer to a posed question;
5. Raising questions that help advance discussion;
6. Offering an original idea related to the topic of discussion;
7. Drawing on evidence (social scientific data, personal experience, popular culture) to either support or challenge ideas;
8. Constructively critiquing an idea offered in the readings or by a class member (including me);
9. Pointing out how various comments complement each other or are at odds;
10. Playing “devil’s advocate.”

I want to stress that we will be working on these skills. You are not expected to have these perfected by the first day of class or even by the end. All I am asking is that you make a good faith effort to practice them. My job is to provide a safe and non-threatening atmosphere that, hopefully, will facilitate discussion.

Ground Rules

1. Come to class on time, so discussion is not interrupted.
2. Come to class having read all the readings.
3. Address each other when speaking, rather than directing comments to me (unless, of course, you are referring to something I said or want to direct a comment or question specifically to me).
4. Understand that contributing more does not necessarily mean better. The best contributors are usually those who are the best listeners. I ask that people contribute regularly and meaningfully. Dominating discussion and or not being sensitive to the direction of the discussion are just as problematic as not saying anything at all.
5. Take to heart, especially those who have difficulty speaking up in groups, that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment.

6. Respect silences. Some people become anxious when there is a lull in the conversation and feel compelled to say something just to fill the silence. Periodic silences are appropriate. For example, they give more reserved people the opportunity to jump in. Or, they can give the group a chance to think about what has been said and how various comments relate to each other. On occasion I will actually call for reflective periods of silence.
7. Personal information that people share in class should not be discussed outside of class.