

**PRISON HISTORY AND CULTURE  
SOCIOLOGY 334**

Department of Sociology & Anthropology  
DePauw University  
Spring 2016  
MWF 1:40-2:40 p.m.

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**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This seminar will focus on sociological analyses of prisons in the United States from their inception to present day. We will consider how conceptualizations of prison, theories of punishment, and institutional practices have changed over time and how, despite historical variation, prisons remain a unique and powerful form of social control. Because prisons control the lives of particular populations more than others (i.e., young, inner-city African-American men) we will use the intersection between racism, discrimination against the poor, and hegemonic masculinity as a central analytic frame.

We will ask ourselves the following questions and turn to a diverse set of voices (e.g., prisoners, correctional administrators, prison activists, criminologists, prison guards) to find answers: How can we explain the rise of the Carceral state and the prison industrial complex? How does prison exacerbate existing race and class inequalities? Why are certain versions of the historical development of prisons in this country accepted more than others? Why are prisons considered big business and who benefits from them? Is it accurate to say that prison actually creates crime? What is driving prison overcrowding? In addition, we will explore prison life and variation in the cultures of men's prisons, women's prisons and on death row. We end with an exploration of avenues for social change, looking specifically at the role of (anti-)prison activists and the abolition movement.

**COURSE GOALS**

The goals for this course are as follows: 1) Learn how to analyze prisons (as a major social institution) from a sociological perspective and understand the value of doing so; 2) Describe the expansion of the Carceral state and the solidification of the prison industrial complex; 3) Understand how racism, classism and masculinity are central to the formation, history and persistence of prisons; 4) Read what prison life is like from the perspectives of those who live and work there; 5) Recognize the complexity of social behavior, groups, organizations and institutions, and how that influences our assessment of prison; 6) Be able to conceptualize alternatives to prison and viable strategies for social change; 7) Acquire and/or fine-tune your critical reading, writing and discussion skills.

## REQUIRED READINGS

**A. Books.** The following books are available on-line or at Eli's Books:

- Davis, Angela. 2003. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* NY: Seven Stories.  
George, Erin. 2014. *A Woman Doing Life, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.* NY: Oxford University Press.  
Gordon, Robert Ellis and Inmates of the Washington Correctional Systems. 2000. *The Funhouse Mirror: Reflections on Prison.* Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press.  
Oshinsky, David. 1997. *Worse Than Slavery: Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice.* NY: Free Press.  
Santos, Michael. 2006. *Inside: Life Behind Bar in America.* Boston: St. Martin's Press.

**B. Articles.** There are a number of required readings on library Reserves.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**A. Exams.** There will be two in-class exams (Friday, March 18, 2016; Tuesday, May 17, 2016.) Please note that Exam 1 is on the Friday before Spring break. Do NOT take this class if you cannot begin your break when the official break begins. No early or alternative arrangements will be made.

**B. Papers.** You will be writing 4 papers over the course of the semester.

Paper 1. (Due Friday, February 5, 2016). Write a 2-page (double-spaced) essay that answers the following questions: What is your current perspective on prisons in the United States? How did you arrive at this perspective? Although this paper will not be graded, I will use it to get a sense of your writing skills and your ideas on the subject matter of the course. Your paper should have a clear thesis and an interesting title that captures your thesis. Please proofread your essay before turning it in. (Required, but not graded.)

Paper 2. (Due Monday, February 29, 2016). Using any of the readings assigned during the first four weeks of class, write a 5-6 page analytic paper. By analytic, I mean that the paper should not be a mere summary of the readings (although you might have to do some summarizing in order to develop your argument) and it should offer your original insight. You may write a critique, present an argument, compare and contrast the readings, or apply the reading to a previous reading. I will be looking for a specific, original thesis that is well developed and draws on the course readings for evidence.

Paper 3. (Due Friday, April 8, 2016). You will attend DePauw Dialogue 2.0 and write a 2-page paper relating the conversation to both the content of this class.

Paper 4. (Due Friday, April 22, 2016). Using any of the readings assigned Weeks 5-12, write a 5-6 page analytic paper. By analytic, I mean that the paper should not be a mere summary of the readings (although you might have to do some summarizing in order to develop your argument) and it should offer your original insight. You may write a critique, present an

argument, compare and contrast the readings, or apply the reading to a previous reading. I will be looking for a specific, original thesis that is well developed and draws on the readings for evidence.

Paper 5. (Due either Monday, May 9 or Wednesday, May 11). This 2-3 page collaborative paper is tied to a small group assignment described below.

**C. Supermax Control Unit exercise.** On Friday, April 29, 2016 you will be assigned to a group of 4 people and given a specific exercise to complete that will require group planning, discussion, a 2-3-page paper written collaboratively, and a 15-minute presentation. Presentations will be May 9 and 11 (the last week of class).

**D. Class participation.** (Due every class session) Everyone is expected to come to class having completed, thought about and prepared to discuss and/or write about the assigned readings. Class participation will be assessed in terms of the quality and regularity of your contribution. I will ask for a self-assessment prior to deciding on a grade. Absences from class affect your class participation grade.

**E. Prison Tour.** At the beginning of the semester I will poll the class on your interest in going on a prison tour (or two). Tours will be scheduled for either Tuesday/Thursday morning/afternoon. Because the tour will take place outside of class, participation is voluntary and I cannot excuse you from other classes or obligations.

## COURSE POLICIES

**A. 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.

Exam 1	100 points
Exam 2	100 points
Paper 1	Read but not graded
Paper 2	100 points
Paper 3	25 points
Paper 4	100 points
Paper 5 (Group)	40 points
Group presentation	40 points
Group participation	20 points
Class participation	100 points (50 each half)
Total	625 points

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

**B. What the Grades Mean.**

A = Work that goes beyond the requirements of assignments 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 adequately meets the requirements of the assignments. Demonstrates a solid command of the course material, an ability to apply concepts to the real world with only minor problems, and good organization and expression of ideas.

C = Work that partially meets the requirements of the assignments. 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 assignments. 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 assignments. Demonstrates no command of the course material, unable to appropriately or consistently apply concepts to the real world, and insufficiently organizes and expresses ideas.

\*\*\*Please note that the above descriptions are not consistent with the common belief among students that a B is average and a C is failing.

**C. Late Work/Make-up Work.** All papers are due in class on the dates indicated on the syllabus, unless I receive, in advance, an official notification that you will be off campus on university business (e.g., athletic or academic event) or if you are gravely ill and contact me before class and make alternate arrangements. Unexcused late papers will be penalized 5 points for every 24-hour period in which they are late. Out of fairness to the entire class, no exceptions will be made (this includes missing class for job interviews, weddings, cheaper airfare, senioritis, etc.). As noted above, our first exam is scheduled for the Friday before Spring Break. No early or alternative exams will be given—this means you should contact your grandmother now to alert her that your plane ticket home should not interfere with this date.

**D. Security Measures.** Please keep copies of all of the work you hand in. All assignments should be handed in to me directly. Do not put assignments in my mailbox or under my office door. If you are turning in something late, it is your responsibility to contact me and make arrangements to drop off the material.

**E. Extra Credit.** None. No exceptions.

**F. Honor Code.** As with all courses at DePauw University, you are bound by the policy on academic integrity. I highly encourage you to reread the policy if you have not reread it this semester: <http://www.depauw.edu/handbooks/student/acadlife/app/aip/dishonesty/>  
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 1-4 should be written without collaboration and should reflect your independent ideas.

**G. 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 on the second floor of the UB: [765-658-6267](tel:765-658-6267).

**H. Laptops and Phones.** No laptops in class unless I specifically ask you to bring them. This means that you will need to make hardcopies of the readings posted on Reserves and/or bring in notes from the reading. Please silence your phone and put it away. No texting during class.

\*\*\*If you have read and understand A-H above, please email me ([rbordt@depauw.edu](mailto:rbordt@depauw.edu)) with the subject line: “I have read and understand the course policies.”

## COURSE SCHEDULE (approximate)

<b>WEEK 1</b> Feb 1, 3, 5	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>INTRODUCTION AND CONCEPTUAL FRAME</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Introductions. View, "Prison Map"</p> <p><b>I. Zooming In: A Glimpse Inside Prison</b></p> <p><b>W:</b> Read Gordon, et. al. 2000. <i>The Funhouse Mirror</i>. Pullman, WA: WSU Press, pp. xi-43. [Book]</p> <p><b>F:</b> Read Gordon, et.al. 2000. <i>The Funhouse Mirror</i>. Pullman, WA: WSU Press, pp. 44-108. [Book] <b>Paper 1 due in class.</b></p>
<b>WEEK 2</b> Feb 8, 10, 12	<p><b>II. Zooming Out: The Carceral State and the Prison Industrial Complex</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Film clip, "The Biggest Prison System in History" Read Gottschalk. 2015. <i>Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 1-22. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>W:</b> Read Davis. 2003. <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> NY: Seven Stories Press, pp. 9-21; 84-104. [Book]</p> <p><b>F:</b> No class (RB at conference)</p>

<b>WEEK 3</b> Feb 15, 17, 19	<p><b>III. Sociological Theories of Punishment</b></p> <p><b>Macro Theories:</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Read Garland. 1990. <i>Punishment and Modern Society</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pp. 3-22. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>W:</b> Read Foucault. 1977. <i>Discipline and Punish</i>, NY: Vintage, pp. 508-513. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>The Meso-level:</b></p> <p><b>F:</b> Read Hagler, 2015. “8 Facts You Should Know About the Criminal Justice System,” p. 1 [Reserves]</p> <p>Read Ricciardelli et al. 2015. “Strategic Masculinities: Vulnerabilities, Risk, and the Production of Prison Masculinities,” pp. 491-513. [Reserves]</p>
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<b>WEEK 4</b> Feb 22, 24, 26	<p><b>Micro Theories:</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Goffman. 1961. <i>Asylums</i>. NY: Doubleday, pp. 3-74. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>W:</b> Film, “Stanford Prison Experiment.”            Read Schmid and Jones. 1991. “Suspended Identity: Identity Transformation in a Maximum Security Prison, pp. 147-156. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>F:</b> No class (RB out of town)</p>
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<b>WEEK 5</b> Feb 29, March 2, 4	<b>HISTORY OF U.S. PRISONS</b> <b>IV. The North (1830s-1960s)</b>  <b>M:</b> Read Rothman David. 1994. "Perfecting Prison: United States, 1789-1865," pp. 100-116. [Reserves] <b>Paper 2 due in class.</b>  <b>W:</b> Read Rotman, Edgardo. 1994. "The Failure of Reform: United States, 1865-1965," pp. 151-177. [Reserves]  <b>V. The South (1830s-1960s)</b>  <b>F:</b> Read Oshinsky. 1997. <i>Worse than Slavery</i> . NY: Free Press, pp. 1-53. [Book]
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<b>WEEK 6</b> March 7, 9, 11	<b>M:</b> Bukka White, "Parchman Farm Blues" Read Oshinsky. 1997. <i>Worse than Slavery</i> . NY: Free Press, pp. 55-106. [Book]  <b>W:</b> Alan Lomax, "Recordings of Parchman Farm" Read Oshinsky. 1997. <i>Worse than Slavery</i> . NY: Free Press, pp. 109-155 [Book]  <b>F:</b> Film clip, "Slavery by Another Name" Read Oshinsky. 1997. <i>Worse than Slavery</i> . NY: Free Press, pp. 157-222. [Book]  <b>[Prison tour sometime this week]</b>
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<b>WEEK 7</b> March 14, 16, 18	<b>M:</b> Read Oshinsky. 1997. <i>Worse than Slavery</i> . NY: Free Press, pp. 223-255. [Book]  <b>W:</b> Catch-up. Review for exam.  <b>F: Exam 1</b>
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<b>WEEK 8</b> March 21, 23, 25	
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<b>WEEK 9</b> March 28, 30, April 1	<p><b>VI. Contemporary U. S. Prisons (1970s-present)</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Lecture, “Overview of U.S. Prisons (1970s-present)”</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRISON LIFE</b></p> <p><b>VII: A Male Prisoner’s Perspective</b></p> <p><b>W:</b> Read Santos. 2006. <i>Inside: Life Behind Bars in America</i>. NY: St. Martin’s, pp. xiii-xxxiii. [Book]</p> <p><b>F:</b> Read Santos. 2006. <i>Inside: Life Behind Bars in America</i>. NY: St. Martin’s, pp. 61-121. [Book]</p> <p><b>April 1—last day to drop class.</b></p>
<b>WEEK 10</b> April 4, 6, 8	<p><b>M:</b> Film clip, “John Oliver on Prisons”</p> <p>Read Santos. 2006. <i>Inside: Life Behind Bars in America</i>. NY: St. Martin’s, pp. 122-155. [Book]</p> <p><b>W: No class (DePauw Dialogue 2.0: required to write Paper 3)</b></p> <p><b>F:</b> Discuss DePauw Dialogue 2.0. <b>Paper 3 due at the beginning of class.</b></p>

<b>WEEK 11</b> April 11, 13, 15	<p><b>VIII. A Female Prisoner's View</b></p> <p><b>M:</b> Read George. 2014. <i>A Woman Doing Life</i>. NY: Oxford, pp. 1-49. [Book]</p> <p><b>W:</b> Film clip, "Mothers in Prison"            Read George. 2014. <i>A Woman Doing Life</i>. NY: Oxford, pp. 50-100. [Book]</p> <p><b>F:</b> Film clip, "Erin George"            Read George. 2014. <i>A Woman Doing Life</i>. NY: Oxford, pp. 101-157 [Book]</p> <p><b>[Prison tour sometime this week]</b></p>
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<b>WEEK 12</b> April 18, 20, 22	<p><b>M:</b> Read George. 2010. <i>A Woman Doing Life</i>. NY: Oxford, pp. 200-223. [Book]</p> <p><b>IX. Death Row and Executions</b></p> <p><b>W:</b> Voice Recordings.            Read Abu-Jamal. 1996. <i>Live from Death Row</i>. NY: Anchor, pp. several essays.            [Reserves]            Read Abu-Jamal. 2015. <i>Writing on the Wall</i>, NY: City Lights, several essays.            [Reserves]</p> <p><b>F:</b> Film, "Framing an Execution."            Read Weinglass.1996. <i>Live from Death Row</i>. NY: Anchor, pp. 169-185            [Reserves] <b>Paper 4 due in class.</b></p>
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<b>WEEK 13</b> April 25, 27, 29	<p><b>M:</b> Read Johnson. 2013. “A Few Words on the Last Words of Condemned Prisoners,” pp. 112-121. [Reserves]</p> <p><b>W:</b> Read Sarat. 2014. <i>Gruesome Spectacles: Botched Executions and American’s Death Penalty</i>. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, pp. 1-29 [Reserves]</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>PRISON ACTIVISM, ABOLITION, AND SOCIAL CHANGE</b></p> <p><b>F:</b> Davis. 2003. <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> NY: Seven Stories, pp. 105-115. [Book]; Samuels and Stein. “Perspectives on Critical Resistance,” pp.1-14. [Reserves]; Wimsatt.2001. <i>No More Prisons</i>. NY: Soft Skull Press, pp. 144-156. [Reserves]</p> <p>Newman. 1998. “Not All Prisoner Lawsuits are Frivolous,” pp. 55-57. [Reserves]; Wright and Pens.1998. “<i>Prison Legal News</i>’ Top Ten Non-Frivolous Prisoner Lawsuits,” pp. 58-61. [Reserves]</p> <p>Burton-Rose.1998. “Solidarity in Stillwater,” pp.127-131. [Reserves]; Attica Liberation Faction. 1971.“Manifesto of Demands and Anti-Depression Platform,” pp. 303-309. [Reserves]</p> <p>On-line:            Hurricane G, “No More Prisons” <a href="https://youtu.be/N3UZ0v3jGvQ">https://youtu.be/N3UZ0v3jGvQ</a>            Orange Jump Suit:  <a href="http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/opinion/an-orange-jumpsuit-for-lent.html?emc=edit_th_20140419&amp;nl=todaysheadlines&amp;nlid=18609214">http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/opinion/an-orange-jumpsuit-for-lent.html?emc=edit_th_20140419&amp;nl=todaysheadlines&amp;nlid=18609214</a>            Tim Robbins:  <a href="http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-13383741">http://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-13383741</a></p> <p><b>Student Opinion Forms in class</b>  <b>Get small group assignment</b></p>
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<b>WEEK 14</b> May 2, 4, 6	<p><b>M:</b> <b>Work on group assignment in class</b></p> <p><b>W:</b> <b>Work on group assignment in class</b></p> <p><b>F:</b> <b>Work on group assignment in class</b></p>
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<b>WEEK 15</b> May 9, 11	<b>M:</b> Group Presentations (Group 1-2); <b>Paper 5 due in class (Groups 1-2).</b> <b>W:</b> Group Presentations (Group 3-4); <b>Paper 5 due in class (Groups 3-4).</b>
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<b>Final Exam Week</b>	<b>Exam 2</b> (Tuesday, May 17, 8:30-11:30 a.m.)
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