

Incarceration Nation

How does a country with five percent of the world's population, a country that nominally values freedom above all else, come to engage nearly a quarter of the world's incarcerated people? In this survey course we investigate the history of imprisonment in the United States—as theorized and as practiced—from the founding of the republic to the present day. Special attention is paid to the politics, economics, race politics, and religious logics of mass incarceration; and to efforts afoot to push back against mass incarceration, both nationally and locally, and to prefigure an abolitionist future.

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Course Format and requirements

This course has two weekly lectures and small-group discussions on Fridays. This course is offered with support of a course operating grant from the Center for Community Engagement and is designed to foster decarceration-minded community-engagement opportunities for students that are interested.

Attendance: Attendance is required and will be taken. You are free to miss three class sessions without explanation or apology. Beyond that please make a point of checking in with an instructor or with your small-group facilitator to let us know what's going on. Should you miss class you will want to review the "minutes" posted on blackboard. There is no substitute for presence in class, but should you wish to "make up" the work, you may consider being especially active in that week's discussion-board forum.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments are substantive in depth and in heft, but we have done our best to limit assignments to 100 or so required pages per week. It is essential for you to try to do the reading. All reading assignments on the syllabus are for Mondays and Wednesdays.

Instructors reserve the right to amend assignments and to post short additional reading assignments on the fly. Any such changes will be noted in class and via Blackboard announcement.

Class Participation: Attendance and active listening during lecture are important features of class participation, and we will do our best to make time for questions. The lion's share of class participation, however, will take place in your Friday small group. If forced to say which is more important, attendance at lecture or attendance at small group discussion, we would say without hesitation that small-group discussion is.

Reading Response Posts: Weekly reading response posts will be posted on Blackboard and can be accessed either by clicking on "Discussions" or looking under "Course content." Each week, you are expected to post one primary post and one response post to a classmate. Your primary post is due by 5:00 pm on Wednesday, and your response post is due before class on Friday. Your first post is due before class this Friday, and this week no response post is required. Late posts will not be penalized but do your best please to not make a habit of this.

Primary posts should be in the ballpark of 250 words and should probably take roughly 30 minutes to complete. Response posts can be as short as a few sentences. In early weeks, your small-group facilitators will model the sort of engagement that we are looking for. You are free to adopt whatever form you wish for your post, but here is a good default template: choose an *analytic* from one of the week's assigned readings. By "analytic" I mean a critical category that the author uses. Choose an analytic that seems important to the author's argument and/or to the historical and/or conceptual terrain that they are attempting to map. Quote a usage or two directly from the text. In your own words, explain what the category means, how it functions in the author's argument, and/or what it helps illuminate about some facet of incarceration in the United States. *Think* with the category. That is, identify other critical categories and/or other things that this analytic might help to illuminate. Think about the category's implications and/or limitations. Lastly and most importantly, pose a question provoked by your thinking with and about this category that you would like to tackle in small-group discussion.

Exams: The midterm will have two components, both open-book and untimed: two essays (750+ words each) to be completed independently (66%) and a *critical term glossary* to be completed in collaboration with your small group (33%). All components will be due to your small-group facilitator on March 7th. Everyone will take the midterm exam. For the final exam, you will be asked either to present a blueprint for ending mass incarceration (or some goal comparable in scope) or to design an experiment to ameliorate some facet of carcerality in your community (2,000ish words) to be turned into your small-group facilitator on May 9th. However, those of you who opt to complete this class as a community-engaged class will *not* be required to complete the final exam.

Community engagement: This is a community-engaged course and is generously supported with a course operating grant from the good folks at the Center for Community Engagement. Pursuant to CCE's criteria, the course exposes students to issues of inequality or unmet needs in community, and course material is taught in collaboration with or adjacent to a set of community

partners. Community partners for this course include the [Center for Community Alternatives](#), [Release Aging People in Prison \(RAPP Campaign\)](#), and [Free the People ROC](#).

To complete this course as a community-engaged course, you will be expected to soulfully participate in the work of one or more of these organizations. As an hour expectation, 25 or so hours over the course of the semester seems like a reasonable goal. Then, in lieu of the final, you will write up a short (300-500ish word) critical account of the activities you have undertaken. That is, we will want to hear about what you have done and what your takeaways are for future endeavors. Like the final, this reflection will be due to your facilitator on May 9th.

Minutes: In each class, someone will take “minutes” to be posted on blackboard. For the first couple of weeks, TAs will take minutes. Thereafter minutes will be taken by student volunteers.

Grades: Final grades will be determined according to the following formula: Class participation (30%); Weekly writing assignments (20%); Midterm (25%); Final or community-engagement (25%).

The spirit of this class: It is rarely obvious what abolition looks like in practice. What might “abolitionist education” look like? Is it possible to foster a space for abolitionist learning within a corporate university? These are open questions, which we take very seriously. In the months ahead we will do our best to provide the centripetal force necessary for rigorous, disciplined, collaborate inquiry to take place. Simultaneously, we will do our best to be compassionate and adaptative. We are avid about the practices of inquiry and the cultivation of solidarity, and we believe that abolition has much to offer to human flourishing and human survival. Complementarily, we will do our very best to resist the pedagogical crutches of terror and punishment.

Additional Notes

*As per university guidelines, the credit hour policy of the College tabulates a four-credit course as including 150 instructional minutes, 50 minutes of equivalent activities, and 480 minutes of supplementary student work per week.

* All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with University of Rochester’s code of Academic Honesty. In short, your work must be your own. For more information look online: <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>

* If and when needed, we encourage you to use the tutors at the Writing, Speaking, and Argument Program: <http://writing.rochester.edu/index.html>

* Supplementary learning supports can be found in the Learning Center <http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/>

* The University of Rochester respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities. In the event you encounter any barrier(s) to full participation in this course due to the impact of a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Resources at disability@rochester.edu;

Books available for purchase and on to be placed on reserve

Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (Semiotext(e), 2018)

Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba, *Let This Radicalize You* (2023)

Susan Burton and Cari Lynn, *Becoming Ms. Burton* (2017) [Not yet in bookstore]

Itinerary

The itinerary that follows is subject to amendment. Changes to assignments will be prominently noted in class and announced on blackboard. Guests and supplementary events are supported by a Course Operating Grant grants from the Center for Community Engagement.

January 22	Introductions
<u>Unit I</u>	<u>The Carceral Modern</u>
January 24	Frank Schmalleger, <i>Criminal Justice</i> , 250-254* Angela Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> 9-21* Recommended: Timothy Crimmins, "Incarceration as Incapacitation: An Intellectual History"*
January 27	Norman Johnson, <i>Forms of Constraint</i> , 67-87, 174-177* Smith, <i>The Prison in the American Imagination</i> , 1-23* Recommended: Michel Foucault, "Panopticism," from <i>Discipline and Punish</i> , 195-228*
January 29	Reader's choice: choose at least one Jennifer Graber, <i>The Furnace of Affliction</i> , 73-101* Rebecca McClellan, <i>The Crisis of Imprisonment</i> , 53-86* Recommended: Sarah Haley, <i>No Mercy Here</i> , 17-57*
January 31	Small group
February 3	Reader's choice: choose at least one Nicole Rafter, <i>Creating Born Criminals</i> , 93-132* Khalil Gibran Muhammad, <i>The Condemnation of Blackness</i> , 35-87*
February 5	Kelly Lytle Hernández, <i>City of Inmates</i> , 1-15* Brianna Nofil, <i>The Migrant's Jail</i> , 1-15* Recommended: Stuart Schrader, <i>Badges without Borders</i> , 1-25*
February 7	Small group
<u>Unit II</u>	<u>Mass Incarceration and/or the Prison Industrial Complex</u>
February 10	Michelle Alexander, <i>The New Jim Crow</i> , 20-57* James Forman, Jr., "Racial Critiques of Mass Incarceration: Beyond the New Jim Crow"*

February 12	Orisanmi Burton, <i>The Tip of the Spear</i> , 1-19*
February 14	Small group
February 17	Elizabeth Hinton, <i>From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime</i> , 1-26* Mona Lynch, "Mass Incarceration, Legal Change, and Locale"* Recommended: Marie Gottschalk, <i>Caught</i> , 1-22*
February 19	Christophe Ringer, <i>Necropolitics</i> , 1-16* Recommended: Dubler and Lloyd, "The Political Theology of Mass Incarceration"*
February 21	Small group
February 24	Ruth Wilson Gilmore, <i>Golden Gulag</i> , 5-17, 88-127*
February 26	Loic Wacquant, <i>Punishing the Poor</i> , 41-75*
February 28	Small group
March 3	Jackie Wang, <i>Carceral Capitalism</i> , 11-150
March 5	Wang, <i>Carceral Capitalism</i> , 151-227 Recommended: Wang, 228-322
March 7	Midterm due in small group
<u>Unit III</u>	<u>The carceral present</u>
March 17	Becoming Ms. Burton, Part I
March 19	Holly M. Harner and Suzanne Riley, "The Impact of Incarceration on Women's Mental Health: Responses From Women in a Maximum-Security Prison"* Recommended: Doughty, Bedell, and N'Gambwa, " <i>I really wanna put eyes on these guys</i> : Caregiving in prisons, pandemic, and protest"*
March 21	Small group
March 24	Becoming Ms Burton, Part II
March 26	Scroggins and Malley, "Reentry and the (Unmet) Needs of Women"* Recommended: Heidemann, Cederbaum and Martinez, "Beyond Recidivism: How Formerly Incarcerated Women Define Success"*

March 28	Small group
March 31	Nils Christie, “Conflicts as Property”* Danielle Sered, <i>Until We Reckon</i> , 1-49*
April 2	Schenwar and Law, <i>Prison by any other name</i> , 1-49* Recommended: Nancy Herzog and Kay Whitlock, <i>Carceral Con</i> , 24-50, 102-124*
April 4	Small group
<u>Unit IV</u>	<u>Toward the abolitionist horizon</u>
April 7	Alex Vitale, <i>The End of Policing</i> , 1-30* Mariame Kaba And Andrea Ritchie, <i>No More Police</i> , 41-70*
April 9	Philip McHarris, <i>Beyond Policing</i> , 163-211*
April 11	Small group
April 14	Davarian Baldwin, <i>In the Shadow of the Ivory Tower</i> , 51-86 UR Security Commission Report (2016)*
April 16	Doughty and Dubler, DPS at URM (2022)* Reimagining Campus Safety at the University of Rochester (2023)*
April 18	Small group
April 21	Kelly Hayes and Mariame Kaba, <i>Let this Radicalize You</i> , xi-79
April 23	Hayes and Kaba, <i>Let this Radicalize You</i> , 80-128
April 25	Small group
April 28	Hayes and Kaba, <i>Let this Radicalize You</i> , 129-198
April 30	Hayes and Kaba, <i>Let this Radicalize You</i> , 199-236
May 2	Small group and/or TBD
May 9	Final exam or community-engagement write-up due

* Available on blackboard under Readings