

PPLE-338W: Reforming Criminal Justice  
“Prison Class”

“If you get, give. If you learn, teach.” — Maya Angelou

Description: The United States currently incarcerates about 2.4 million men, women and children. The number of incarcerated does not take into account how many people’s lives are affected by our extensive system of punishment, including those on parole or probation; children of incarcerated parents; and communities that support prison systems. Furthermore, racial disparities in arrests, sentencing, and prison time call into question our guarantees of equal justice and fundamental fairness. Inside the prison walls, many prisoners are subject to a system of control that prioritizes punishment over rehabilitation. This course explores these elements of the penal system with a group of Willamette students and asks, what can be done to reform and improve the system? Willamette students and OSP students will work together on reform ideas, culminating in a research project that will go to a lawmaker, advocacy group or corrections organization for consideration.

Required Texts:

Dwayne Betts, *A Question of Freedom: A Memoir of Learning, Survival, and Coming of Age in Prison* (Avery 2009)

Danielle Sered, *Until We Reckon: Violence, Mass Incarceration, and A Road to Repair* (The New Press, 2019)

Grade Distribution:

25% Class and summit participation

25% Class reflections

20% Reading responses, approximately 750 words

30% Research Project, approximately 10-15 pages. (The research projects will identify an audience [e.g. The Department of Corrections; the Equal Justice Institute or another non-profit; a lawmaker or other advocacy group] and present a solution for a current problem in the criminal justice system.)

**Schedule of Classes and Assignments:**

**1/27 WU only Introduction**

Discussion of goals and expectations, address concerns, get to know one another.  
Discussion of Betts, *A Question of Freedom*

**2/3 WU-OSP class—evening: Pathways to Prison**  
(Note that we will meet at the chicken fountain at 5pm.)

Sered, Introduction and Chapter 1: Across the River of Fire

Ujunwa Anakwenze and Daniyal Zuberi, “Mental Health and Poverty in the Inner City” *Health and Social Work* 38 (August 2013) 4: 147-157

*Class reflection due by Friday, February 7<sup>th</sup> by noon to WISE under Assignments.*

**2/10 WU-OSP class: What’s gender/masculinity got to do with it?**

Ann Arnett Ferguson, *bad boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity* (University of Michigan Press, 2001) Chapter 2: The punishing room

Victor Rios, “The Consequences of the Criminal Justice Pipeline on Black and Latino Masculinity” *The Annals of the American Academy* 623 (May 2009): 150-162.

Pao Lee Vue, Louisa Schein and Bee Vang, “Comparative Racialization and Unequal Justice in the Era of Black Lives Matter: The Dylan Yang Case” *Hmong Studies Journal* 17 (2016) 1-21.

“APA Guidelines for the Psychological Practice with Boys and Men” August 2018.

*Class reflection due by Friday, February 14<sup>th</sup> by noon to WISE under Assignments.*

**2/17 WU only class: Social groups and Crime**

Nitin Nohria, “You’re not as virtuous as you think” *The Washington Post*, October 15, 2015.

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/youre-not-as-virtuous-as-you-think/2015/10/15/fec227c4-66b4-11e5-9ef3-fde182507eac\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/youre-not-as-virtuous-as-you-think/2015/10/15/fec227c4-66b4-11e5-9ef3-fde182507eac_story.html)

Philip Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (Random House 2007) Chapter 12 & 13, both on “Investigating Social Dynamics.”

Piper Kerman, *Orange is the New Black* (Spiegel and Grau 2011) Chapter 1: “Are you Gonna Go My Way?”

*Response to reading due by Friday, February 21<sup>nd</sup> at noon to WISE.*

**2/24 WU-OSP Policing and Prosecution: Why is the racial disparity in prison so great?**

The Sentencing Project, “The Color of Justice: Racial and Ethnic Disparity in State Prisons” (2016)

Llewellyn J. Cornelius, “Seeing Deaths Resulting from Interpersonal Violence as a Function of ‘State Violence’: Time for a Health Disparities Paradigm Shift?” *Health and Social Work* 42 (May 2017) 2: 125-127

Marie Gottschalk, *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton University Press, 2015) Chapters 8, “Split Verdict: The Non, Non, Nons and the ‘Worst of the Worst.’”

Sered, Chapter 2: Prison’s Broken Promise

*Class reflection due by Friday, February 28<sup>th</sup> at noon to WISE.*

**3/2—WU only Rehabilitation, Restorative Justice, Transformative Justice**

Oakford, Brumfield, Goldvale and Tatum, “Investing in Futures: Economic and Fiscal Benefits of Postsecondary Education in Prison” *Vera Institute of Justice*. January 2019

Sered, Chapters 3-4.

The Lifers Public Safety Steering Committee, “Ending the Culture of Street Crime.” *The Prison Journal* 84 (December 2004) 4: 48S-68S.

*Response to reading due by Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> at noon to WISE.*

**3/9— WU-OSP Impact on families of the incarcerated.**

“Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families: A national community-driven report led by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, Forward Together, and Research Action Design” (September 2015)

Reform project stage one—examining project ideas.

*Class reflection due by Friday, March 13<sup>th</sup> at noon to WISE.*

**3/16 WU-OSP Addressing Victim Needs.** Can a more just system for offenders also better account for victim needs?

Susan L. Miller, *After the Crime: The Power of Restorative Justice Dialogues Between Victims and Violent Offenders* (New York University Press, 2011)  
Chapters: 1-2, 5, 9, 13.

Sujatha Baliga, “Forgiveness of Unforgiveable Acts”  
<http://www.dailygood.org/story/950/transcript-of-awakin-call-with-sujatha-baliga-awakin-org/>

*Class reflection due Friday, March 20<sup>nd</sup> at noon on WISE under Assignments.*

3/23—no class Spring Break

**3/30—WU-OSP: Reform ideas**

Doran Larson, “Why Scandinavian Prisons are Superior” *The Atlantic* (September 24, 2013)

Sered, Chapters 5-7.

**4/8—WU-OSP: Writing Policy Memos and reform ideas for Oregon**

Workshop on policy problem definition and writing public policy memos

Annotated bibliography of 5 sources related to your reform area due. Note: I will help provide additional sources to choose from and provide instruction on writing annotated bibliographies. Select one article that you think is especially useful and be prepared to summarize its argument to your research group.

**4/13—WU-OSP Research reform workshop.**

Research teams are responsible for dividing responsibilities for drafting.

**4/20—WU-OSP Research reform workshop.**

Research teams are responsible for dividing responsibilities for drafting.

**4/27—WU-OSP: Drafts due for feedback.**

**Transformative Justice Summit: Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> from 11am-2pm @ WU**

**5/4—WU-OSP: Where do we go from here? Reflection and celebration.**

*Short Reflection due on May 8<sup>th</sup> @ noon emailed to me. I will collate all the responses and provide copies to everyone.*

**Final Reflection due: Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> @ 10 pm**