

WGSS 190: Prison Activism

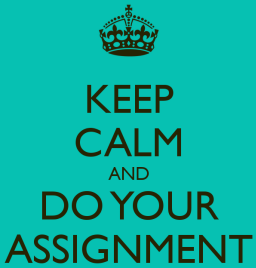


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Professor Ferguson

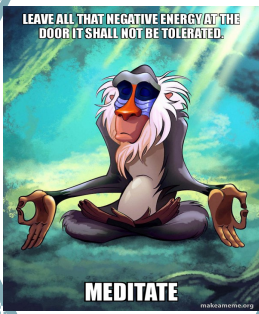
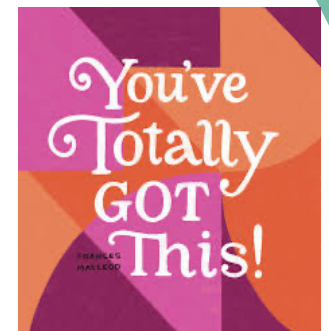
Spring 2023
MWF
1:30-2:20 pm

Oddfellows 105 C

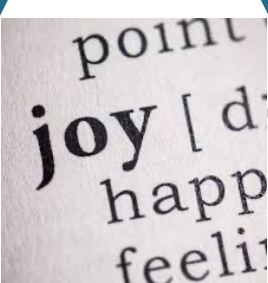


Student Hours:

M: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm
W: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm
F: 11:30 am – 1:30 pm



Readings and
Assignments
Check Canvas &
Syllabus



Policies & Other
Relevant Information
on Canvas

Independent Reading Out of Class



This is a lower-level carceral studies class. Reading outside of class for in-class discussion is a major component of your work for class each day. When you read on your own, take notes in the margins and in your notebooks or laptop.

**On average, you want to do about 2(+)
hours of reading, notetaking, and
thinking outside of class time everyday.**

Canvas is our course learning management system. Everything you need to know about class policies, deadlines, assignments, etc. is on Canvas. Canvas lets you set up notifications when new assignments are posted or when new announcements are posted. Go ahead and set that up. Send an email to canvasteam@allegheny.edu if you need help.

Canvas



Writing



Writing is a key element of the work you'll do for this class. Some of it will be formal, some of it informal. All of it will help you connect to the reading. Waiting until the last minute won't feel good. Practice drafts and ask for help. You'll be happy you did. Click [here](#) to schedule a free writing consultation.

Talking in Class



We learn best when we actively contribute to our class discussions. To do this, you need to take good notes and annotate your readings before class. Contributing to class means working to build our toolkits of knowledge together and it means doing it everyday and consistently. If you need help with this, come to office hours and we will figure out a strategy.

The best way to prepare for class is to take notes when you're reading. You can do this right in your book/article. It's called annotating. You've probably done it before in your educational career. Annotating, taking notes, writing out your questions, these are all really good ways to remember what you were thinking when you were reading. They are also great ways to have stuff to say in class, especially if that is something that freaks you out a little.

Taking Notes



Listening



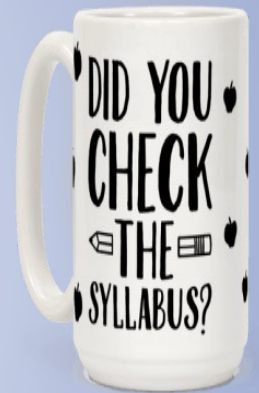
Active listening is essential to engaging with ideas, to learning, and to empathy and understanding. Active listening doesn't mean we don't respond or keep quiet. It means we listen to each other, respect each other's chance to speak, and then consider the ideas presented really carefully and fully. It's also a great skill to learn for note-taking.

Course Description

This class will explore the history of prisons, imprisonment, and prison-related activism of criminalized women, men, and LGBTQ+ communities and racial justice activists and scholars, particularly engaging with the political and intellectual strategies they used to critique and resist the dehumanizing nature of incarceration, dismantle the prison industrial complex, and transform their lives and the lives of those inside and outside the prison. This class will engage with a breadth of urgent and informed writings and perspectives informed two philosophically different approaches to address social inequity, cultures of punishment, and inequities of the prison: reform and abolition. Concepts for consideration and interrogation may include histories of racial oppression, freedom, human rights, social justice, political transformation, restorative justice, crime, criminals, and criminality.

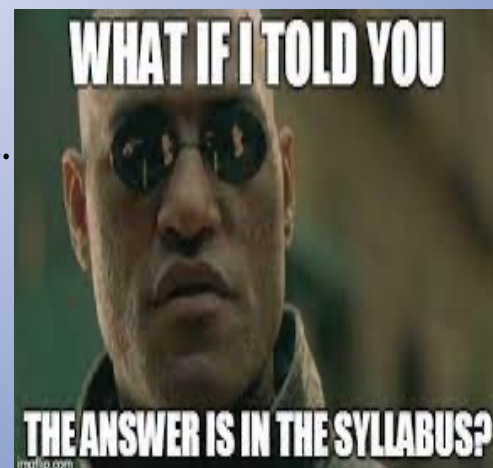
Learning Outcomes

- Hone your skills as close readers of scholarly, journalistic, and alternative media texts.
- Demonstrate your ability to discuss and interrogate different perspectives on social issues related to race, gender, and class, imprisonment, activism, and social injustice.
- Situate yourself within the larger social context and storylines as agents for social change.
- Formulate a solid argument, present the evidence to support it, and propose a course of action, culminating in a well-written policy brief.



Materials and Texts

- Academic articles, book chapters, blog posts, etc. will be posted in CANVAS
- You will be responsible for printing out readings
- A writing notebook, nothing fancy



Questions and Contexts

1 How have historically oppressed people confronted structures of oppression and carried out strategies for liberation?

2 What role has imprisonment and other forms of social control contributed to massive inequalities?

3 How has power and privilege created possibilities or constraints on human resistance in spaces of confinement?

4 How have messages about crime and criminals that pervade our culture influenced perceptions about social differences?

5 How do we start to imagine a new world together? How do we start to value all human beings? How do we build strong and healthy communities? How do we create alternatives that provide more mental health support, treat drug use as medical rather than a criminal issue, and access to affordable education, housing, and greater economic opportunities?



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TOWARDS DECARCERATION: ABOLITION AND THE CARCERAL STATE

DATES	READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS
WEEK 1	Welcome & Introduction to Carceral Studies
Wed. Jan. 18	<i>Professor Intro & Course Goals, Objectives, and Mechanics</i> <i>Syllabus Scavenger Hunt (take home)</i> <i>Student Information Sheet (take home)</i>
Friday, Jan. 20	<i>Getting To Know You Ice Breaker, Canvas & Google Drive</i> <i>Review key terms document (Canvas)</i>
WEEK 2	Theories and Origins of Punishment
Mon. Jan. 23	<i>Reviewing Key Terms & Oppressive Language</i>
Wed. Jan. 25	<i>Read Crime and Punishment in American History (Lawrence M. Friedman)</i>
Friday, Jan. 27	<i>Read Crime and Punishment in American History (Lawrence M. Friedman)</i>
WEEK 3	Race, Mass Incarceration and the Prison Industrial Complex
Mon. Jan. 30	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Read Prison Industrial Complex for Beginners (James Peterson)</i>
Wed. Feb. 1	<i>Watch 13th the documentary (in-class)</i> <i>Read The New Jim Crow (Michelle Alexander)</i>
Friday. Feb 3	<i>Read Race and Mass Incarceration in Philadelphia (Canvas)</i>
WEEK 4	Up North, Down South, Out West
Mon. Feb 6.	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Read One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the South (Matthew Manini)</i>
Wed. Feb. 8	<i>Watch Convict Labor Documentary (in-class)</i> <i>Read City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles (Kelly Hernandez)</i>
Friday. Feb. 10	<i>City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging</i> <i>Watch Eastern State Penitentiary Documentary</i>

DATES	
WEEK 5	Centering Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Sexuality, & Class
Mon. Feb. 13	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Read Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America (Estelle Freedman)</i>
Wed. Feb. 15	<i>Watch The Sentence – Documentary (in class)</i>
Friday. Feb 17	<i>Read Hard Time at Tehachapi: California's First Women's Prison (Kathleen Gains)</i>
WEEK 6	Centering Gender, Race/Ethnicity, Sexuality, & Class
Mon. Feb. 20	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Discuss midterm paper (due Monday, March 13)</i> <i>Listen to podcast on Women and the Impact of Incarceration</i>
Wed. Feb. 23	<i>Read Gendering the Carceral State: African American Women, History and the Criminal Justice (Kali Gross & Cheryl Hicks)</i> <i>Read Indigenous/Native Women</i>
Fri. Feb. 25	<i>Read Women Slain in Queer Love Brawl: African American Women, Same Sex Desire, and Violence in the Urban South (Cookie Woolner)</i> <i>Read The Criminal Justice System and the LGBTQ Community (Steven Peck)</i>
WEEK 7	Civil Rights Movement, Prisoner Rights Movement, & Leal Reform
Mon. Feb. 27	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Watch Jail No Bail documentary</i> <i>Read Blog – U.S. Prison Culture</i>
Wed. March 1	<i>Read Ain't Scared of Your Jail (Zoe Colley)</i>
Fri. March 3	<i>Read We Are Not Slaves: Rethinking the Rise of Carceral States (Robert Chase)</i>
WEEK 8	Spring Break – NO CLASS
WEEK 9	Group Presentation Preparation
Mon. March 13	Midterm Paper Due (Canvas) <i>Identify historical and contemporary instances of prison activism/rebellion</i>
Wed. March 15	<i>Discuss Project Details</i>
Fri. March 17	<i>Independent Group Work</i>

DATES	
WEEK 10	Prison Rebellion Years
Mon. March 20	<i>Read PAD DOC Prison Strike</i> <i>Read Against Law and Order Lockup: The 1970 NYC Jail Rebellions (Toussaint Losier)</i> <i>Read Jailhouse Lawyers: Prisoners Defending Prisoners (Mumia Abu-Jamal)</i>
Wed. March 22	<i>Read Feminism, Torture, and the Politics of Chicana/Third World Solidarity (Alan Gomez)</i> <i>Read All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence (Emily Thuma)</i>
Fri. March 24	<i>Read The Prisoners Rights Movement and Its Impacts (James Jacob)</i> <i>Read Rethinking the American Prison Movement</i>
WEEK 11	Anti-Carceral Feminism
Mon. March 27	<i>Writing response due (Canvas)</i> <i>Read How Feminism shaped the Carceral State</i> <i>Read Reimagining the Movement to End Violence (Beth Richie)</i>
Wed. March 29	<i>Read INCITE: Women of Color Against Violence</i> <i>Histories of Sexuality, Gender, & the Carceral State</i>
Fri. March 31	<i>Read Prison Abolition in Practice (article provided)</i> <i>Trayvon Martin and Prison Abolition (link provided)</i>
WEEK 12	Expanding the Prison Industrial Complex/Carceral State
Mon., April 3	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i> <i>Watch Mass Supervision on Democracy Now (in class)</i> <i>Read Urban (In)Justice</i> <i>Watch Searching for Justice: Life After Lock Up (out of class)</i>
Wednesday, April 5	<i>Read The Prison Nation (Beth Richie)</i> <i>Read Feminist Jails Ignores A Large Problem (Ferguson)</i>
Friday, April 7	<i>Read Artificial Intelligence Bias Society</i> <i>Read AI and Criminal Justice (Katalin Ligeti)</i> <i>Watch Algorithms in the Criminal Justice System (out of class)</i>
WEEK 13	Voices from The Inside
Mon. April, 10	<i>In-class writing response assignment</i>

Assignments

1 Writing:

1 – page critical response papers x 9 = 225 points
(9x25 = 225 total points)

Policy Brief: Draft = 75 points (2 pages)

Final policy paper (3 pages) = 150 pts (75x2 = 150 pts)

Total for writing = 375 points

2 Other Creative Work:

Group Research Project

- Presentation on Historical and/or Contemporary Prison-Related Activism

Total for group project = 150 points

3 In-Class Contributions:

- Consistently contributing, listening, and note-taking in daily class discussions in meaningful ways every single day

38 classes x 5 points per class = 190

4 Attendance:

- Attendance = 38 classes x 3 points per class = 114

Total class points earned = 829

LEAVE ALL THAT NEGATIVE ENERGY AT THE DOOR IT SHALL NOT BE TOLERATED.



MEDITATE

makeameme.org

Distribution Requirements: HE & PD

HUMAN EXPERIENCE (HE)

The study of Human Experience explores human physical, mental, emotional, and/or spiritual experiences as conveyed in texts broadly defined. Through engagement with such texts, students develop an appreciation for human experiences and their representations.

Learning Outcome: Students who successfully complete the HE requirement will demonstrate an understanding of how to interpret human experiences as conveyed in texts (including works of visual and performance art, rituals, cultural artifacts and traditions, and/or the written and spoken word).

POWER, PRIVILEGE & DIFFERENCE: (PD)

Understanding Power, Privilege, & Difference means understanding the role of power, privilege, prejudice, discrimination, stereotypes, inequity, and oppression in human society, in both historical and contemporary contexts, and recognizing these dynamics in the learner's own life and communities.

Learning Outcome: Students who successfully complete this requirement will demonstrate an understanding of the historical and/or contemporary roles of power, privilege, and difference in human society.



How Many Classes Can You Miss?

- I hope you don't miss any class, because even missing **1** class has an effect on your learning, and that's why you're here. I will do my best to make class time useful and valuable for you, including creating activities, lectures, etc. you will be able to replicate on your own. We've got limited time together, so we want to use that time together well and for our fullest spiritual, intellectual, and personal growth. So, if you miss class, you will, in fact, miss stuff. And more than what you're missing, **we** will miss **you**. Absences detract from the whole class experience not just for you but for everyone!
- It's possible you might get sick at least once this semester. You will most likely need a mental health day. And worse things could happen. So, there is a need for some flexibility. How much? **3** unexcused absences without penalty is generous. Also, unless it is an emergency, do not schedule doctor or any other appointments during class times. Unrelated class appointments should be made on your personal time.



How many classes is too many classes?

Yes, there is a point at which you'll have missed too many classes for me to say you've earned credit for the class. This isn't about whether you're a good person or not. And it's definitely not a value judgement. It's a judgement about what having this course on your transcript means. What is the point at which it won't make sense for you to get credit for this class? That's hard to say. And yet, if you miss more than a 3 consecutive days, you should get in touch with me and let me know what's going on so we can make a plan and get you in the best possible shape to be able to pass the class.



How about Late Assignments?

Homework like discussion questions and other in real time things we need for the next class session will have a hard deadline. Here's why: submitting these kinds of assignments late won't be helpful to you as receiving feedback will be important for the next assignment. Hard deadlines are also true for things like rough drafts since workshops and getting feedback are part of the writing process and happen in real time. And lateness is definitely going to be hard to accommodate for presentations as well since there are carved out times in the semester for them. Midterm assignments should not be turned in late since you will have ample amount of time to complete it.

Final assignments: there's very little wiggle room as I'm bound by deadlines at the institutional level.

Overall, getting a good handle on time management and figuring out how to prioritize readings and schedule assignments in a timely way are key to not getting behind and not losing sleep.

I get it, ADULTING IS HARD, but you got this!!

If you're having trouble, let's talk!

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY & HONOR CODE

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND THE HONOR CODE: All sections of the [Allegheny Honor Code](#) apply in this course (as presented in [The Compass](#)). The rules regarding unacknowledged assistance apply to all exams, papers, and other assignments. You will be sent to the Honor Committee if any sign of plagiarism emerges in any of your work, including formal or informal, written or oral, homework or exams. It is your responsibility as an Allegheny student to report any dishonesty you witness to the Honor Committee.

PLAGIARISM: You will be sent to the Honor Committee if any sign of plagiarism emerges in any of your work, including written, oral, homework, formal and informal writing, etc. Plagiarism is another word for cheating. When you plagiarize you directly or indirectly use the ideas and/or language of another person or persons without acknowledgement and claim these words and ideas as your own. You are plagiarizing if you do any or all of the following, though please keep in mind that these are not the only ways to plagiarize: 1) Use others' words directly without proper citation and quotations, 2) Use others' ideas and wording so closely (paraphrasing) that you are essentially quoting them without proper acknowledgement, 3) re-use assignments not written for this class and pretend that they are written for this class, 4) Borrow, buy, steal, download (you get the idea) others' essays, ideas, words, language, etc. and pass them off as your own.

ACADEMIC ALERTS: Allegheny College uses an Academic Alert system to send progress notices to the class deans in the Maytum Center for Student Success (MCSS). **The progress notices are not punitive.** They are an opportunity to connect you with your class dean who can offer additional support and suggest resources if you need assistance. These notices may encourage faculty advisors, coaches (for student-athletes), or other support staff to provide outreach to you as well.

THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

ACCOMMODATIONS: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination status that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. This legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides reasonable accommodation for their disabilities. "[The Office of Student Accessibility and Support Services \(SASS\)](#) at Allegheny College is dedicated to ensuring nondiscrimination and equal access to all programs, services, and activities for qualified students with disabilities. Students with disabilities have access and opportunities to engage in the full range of experiences available to all students at Allegheny including curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities" (taken from the website). Please contact John Mangine, Senior Assistant Dean of Student Accessibility and Support Services at jmangine@allegheny.edu, 814-332-2898 for help with your accommodation.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE: If you need to miss class or reschedule a final examination due to a religious observance, please speak to the professor well in advance to make arrangements. Please see [the Religious Holy Days link](#) for more information.

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO YOU

GATOR SUCCESS GRANTS: Sometime we have unexpected expenses – your glasses break, your computer stops loading, you have to take an emergency trip home due to illness or an emergency, you need money for books – Gator Success Grants are a quick and easy way to get some immediate funds in case you need them. They are not for regular and expected tuition, board or housing needs, but they are there for helping you bridge the gap just in case. There is a simple, on-line application. Here is [the link to the Gator Success Grants](#). There is a limit per year for the amount of funding that any student can receive.

STATEMENT ON BASIC NEEDS: Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food to eat every day or who lacks a safe and stable place to live and learn is urged to contact the [Dean of Students office](#) for support. And always remember that your tuition covers access to all the health, counseling, and academic support services on campus. If you feel comfortable doing so, please notify me so that I may provide or connect you to other resources.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

A range of issues can cause barriers to learning, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, health issues, alcohol/drug problems, feeling down, difficulty concentrating, lack of motivation or feeling ill. These concerns or other stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or may reduce your ability to participate in daily activities. Allegheny College recognizes that mental health is an important piece of the holistic human experience, and that this experience influences your academic success. We encourage students to prioritize their mental well-being by seeking services and support as needed.

Keep in mind, course deadlines, absences, and accommodations for mental health are subject to the course policies and expectations that are set within this syllabus. Students are encouraged to communicate with their professors as soon as possible regarding their needs and seek support if their mental health impacts their academic performance or daily life. When you find yourself struggling emotionally, remember that there are supports available, and you are not alone.

If you should find yourself in difficult circumstances that significantly interfere with your ability to prepare for this class and to complete assignments, please inform me immediately so we can develop a plan. Please do not wait until the last day of class to ask for help.

If you need mental health support, you can access free, confidential services and resources in the [Counseling and Personal Development Center \(CPDC\)](#). CPDC delivers holistic mental health services to the Allegheny College student campus community through brief individual and group counseling, crisis support, outreach programming, consultation, and coordination of care. Students may request services by submitting a form on CPDC's website. *Students may also connect with a mental health clinician at any time by calling Allegheny's 24/7 line: 814-332-2105.*

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency, please call the 24/7 line, Public Safety (814-332-3357), or 911. *When in doubt, reach out.*

TITLE IX

ENGAGING TITLE IX: Allegheny College prohibits sexual misconduct. Under our college policies, I am considered a “Responsible Employee.” That means that I am trained to recognize issues of sexual misconduct and am required to pass on to the school’s [Title IX Coordinator](#) any instances that I see, hear about, or have reason to believe occurred. This includes things that you may share with me. This procedure is in place to ensure that Allegheny College provides a safe environment for everyone in our community and provides assistance, support, resources, and interim measures to anyone who has been subjected to inappropriate behaviors. I will **ALWAYS** be an advocate for you, but I want you to know that if you tell me something that happened to you or someone else, I can keep the information private but can’t promise confidentiality because of my duty to inform the Title IX Coordinator. If you would like to talk with someone who is able to keep the information you share **CONFIDENTIAL**, these are the people you can contact:

ON CAMPUS: [Counseling Center and Personal Development Center, Winslow Health Center, Office of Spiritual and Religious Life](#)

OFF CAMPUS: Meadville Medical Center Emergency Room 814- 333-5500 Meadville Crisis Line -814-324-2732 Women’s Services, Inc. – 814-333-9766