

1. Instructor: Carl Boen

Life Behind the Walls: The Prison Experience EXP-0042-F Mondays, 6-8:30

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2. Course Description

Why are over two-million Americans incarcerated? When a man or woman is sentenced to prison, what experiences will that citizen have? When the CSI television shows end, the 'bad man' goes away (to prison) and never is heard from again; some describe it as 'life in a parallel universe'. The Prison Experience- Life Behind the Walls will explore why people become incarcerated and what actually becomes of them in our prisons. Focal content will include history, structure of prisons, the world of the prisoner and prison staff, and the vast challenges prisons face (most notably rehabilitation). The Prison Experience- Life Behind the Walls will also examine current laws, prison policy, and current research.

3. Statement of Expected Learning Outcomes for the Course

Life Behind the Walls-The Prison Experience will expose students to topics and material that can't be found in a standard textbook. The course will combine an insightful text, a supplementary contemporary, non-fiction work (New Jack- Guarding Sing Sing), pertinent videos (i.e, PBS- Frontline: Prison Nation), a visit to the inside of a prison, and a classroom facilitator with a broad array of experiences that will supplement all learning. It will, in fact, turn our classroom into live events. The Prison Experience will augment students' work in their fields of sociology, psychology, public policy, and history.

Students will engage in meaningful dialogue, discussion, and debate about the many issues (i.e., the complex questions surrounding treatment of a transgender prisoner) that revolve around current and past prison policy and reality. My role will be that of a facilitator to encourage thoughts, questions, and potentially, answers to these complex and current issues. I will use actual examples of inmates, correctional staff, and events to bring home the learning material. Further, students will be encouraged to delve deeper: to gather information and knowledge to further thought, questioning, and growth.

In the beginning of 2014, four 'prison' items have reached the front page of the Boston Globe: the treatment of a transgender inmate at MCI Norfolk, an inmate dying while being held in restraints at the Bridgewater State Hospital, restricting life sentences for juvenile offenders, and the use of segregation as punishment at MCI Walpole. When events such as these occur, they will become discussion points for that week's class. Therefore, our learning will become current, and students will take ownership of the course. If there is a issue that needs further work or learning, our thirteen week class will head there. At the end of the course, I trust our students will be able to effect positive change in the way we look at prisons and prisoners.

Specific learning objectives will include:

1. An awareness of the historical and contemporary processes that affect the US prison experience;
2. An understanding of the complex issues faced by prisoners, corrections staff, prison reform and rehabilitation advocates and policy makers; and
3. An ability to use written, oral, and other forms of communication as tools for exploring course content, synthesizing material from various sources, and forming effective arguments.

4. Course Outline

Week One: Introduction

Our first class will include an introduction to the scope of the course: my background, the issues and challenges surrounding the prisons of 2014, and an overview of the entire course. The first class will also include a thorough overview of the Massachusetts state prison system.

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 3-19

New Jack, Pages 3-56

Boston Globe excerpt: An Inside Look at Massachusetts Prison Life by David Abel, Nov. 14, 2011

Week Two: History of Correctional Thought and Practice

Video- Inside Sing Sing: CSpan

Topics: Societies need to punish, development of prisons in America from 1900-2000, Massachusetts history, The Maximum Security Prisons Five Miles From Tufts- the Charlestown State Prison and the Charles Street Prison

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 20-44

New Jack, Pages 57-94

Week Three: The Offender

Topics: Who's in prison and why, types of convictions, length of sentences, what is going on- over two million people in prisons!

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 45-79

New Jack, Pages 94-126

Excerpts from The New Jim Crow

Weeks Four and Five: My Life As An Inmate- The Harsh Realities

Topics: Entering prisons, the process of imprisonment, the inmate code and slang, racial conflicts, gangs, prisoner roles, all the b.s. (prison food, strip searches...), contraband and the prison black market, Risk management (COMPAS)- students will participate in the prisoner risk management assessment used for classification and program recommendations.

Assignment one is due week four (see section six).

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 81-121

New Jack, Pages 126-170

Video: Frontline PBS- Prison Nation

Week Six: HOPE! Looks at the true meaning of rehabilitation

In the movie The Shawshank Redemption, Andy tells his friend Red: "Remember Red, hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies."

Topics: Prison education, effective treatment programs, has anyone made it??, the life of Kenny W., the challenges of doing positive work

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, 123-163

New Jack, Pages 170-209

Video: Sixty Minutes (CBS)- The Boston University Prison Program

Week Seven: What, I'm behind the wall??

A tour of Walpole- I worked in Walpole for nine years. In the late 1970's, it was the most violent prison in America. What does it look like in 2014? In order for our students to consider prisons, they should have some firsthand knowledge their look, feel, and smell.

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 165-200

New Jack, Pages 210-241

Assignment Two- see section six: due week eight.

Week Eight: The Rights of Inmates, Prison Staff and the Management of Prisons

Topics: Cepulonis and Murphy vs. The Commonwealth of MA (I knew them both personally- I guess I should talk about their litigation that considered state voting rights for prisoners...), First and Fourth Amendment rights, due process, crucial court decisions involving prisons, what rights are left at the front gate

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 201-268

New Jack, Pages 242-272

Week Nine: The Female Offender

Topics: Overview of the female prison population, unique issues of the female offender, MCI Framingham and the Framingham Nine

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 268-310
New Jack, pages 272-304

Week Ten: Titicut Follies Revisited- Incarceration of the Mentally Ill

Topics: Half millions mentally ill people are imprisoned- why, historical perspective for incarceration of the mentally ill, Bridgewater State and what is Titicut Follies?, national trends
Video- The New Asylum PBS

Readings:

Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Pages 311-329

New Jack, Pages 304-319

Boston Globe excerpts (various dates), February and March, 2014

Week Eleven: The Sexual Offender- What Does Society Do?

Topics: 'A day to Life': the civil commitment process of the Massachusetts Treatment Center, the meaning for a sex offender in MA, current policy and practice of dealing with our nation's sex offenders (or living under the underpass- Miami), effective approaches to successful reentry of sex offenders

Week Twelve: The Great Debates

Topics: Use of isolation for punishment, sixteen year olds committed to life without parole, college classes for inmates, the death penalty. These are some suggestions for the great debates of week 12. Students will present their arguments in debate format.

Assignment: See section seven, student evaluations

Week Thirteen: Prisons in 2025- what will our prisons look like and what should they look like in 2015? Course summary and closing thoughts

5. Required Texts

Classroom Text: Prisons Today and Tomorrow, Third Edition (2014), by Blackburn Fowler, and Pollock

Supplementary Reading:

New Jack- Guarding Sing Sing, Ted Conover, (2000)

6. Evaluation of Students

Assignment One- due on Week 4. Three to five page paper

Work, treatment, and education are crucial to the success of an inmate returning to society. Go to the Massachusetts's (or your home state's) D.O.C. website and review an education, treatment, or work program. Describe the program and its benefits to the prison, the inmate, and society. Which inmates would participate? Have these efforts been successful? Based on your readings from New Jack or from your reaction to The Farm, how would that program work in Sing Sing or Angola. Can it be effective in these settings?

Assignment Two- Reaction to the Prison Visit- due on Week 8. Three to five page paper
After visiting Walpole, what were your reactions to the prison? Explain the similarities and differences from what we've discussed in class and from what you saw in person. Was it a prison where rehabilitation could occur?

Assignment Three- The Great Debate- due Weeks 12 and 13

Students will take a stand on one of the crucial issues facing prisons as face 2014 and beyond. Students will present their argument in class and prepare a five page summary of their position.

Final grades will be based upon:

1. Assignment One: Prison Program Paper	20%
2. Assignment Two: Reaction to Prison Paper	20%
3. Assignment Three: Debate Project	25%
4. Monday's Assignments (One Page Reactions)	25%
5. Attendance and Class Participation	10%.

Please recognize that I consider attendance and class participation crucial to the learning process. With this in mind, your interactions and participatory energy will be considered in final grading.

Grading*

A	Superior work
B	Meritorious Work
C	Work without marked merit or defect
D	Unsatisfactory
F	Failure

* from the Tufts Bulletin

This syllabus is subject to minor changes.

