

## 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 contemporary mass incarceration, and to the efforts afoot to push back against mass incarceration, both nationally and locally.

### Instructors

Joshua Dubler, Professor	<a href="mailto:joshua.dubler@rochester.edu">joshua.dubler@rochester.edu</a> Office hours: Monday after class, Wednesday prior to class, and by appointment
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### Books available for purchase and on to be placed on reserve

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition* (Haymarket, March 2, 2021)  
Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us* (Haymarket, February 23, 2021)  
Judith Levine and Erica Meiners, *The Feminist and the Sex Offender* (Verso, 2020)  
Maya Schenwar and Victoria Law, *Prison By Any other Name: The Harmful Consequences of Popular Reforms* (New Press, 2020)  
Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism* (Semiotext(e), 2018)

### Course Format

This course is a mixture of synchronous content and content that can be engaged with synchronously *or* asynchronously. Monday \*lectures\* will be recorded during class time, and will be made available shortly thereafter as audio podcasts. On Wednesdays, we will generally meet in small groups, either in person or on zoom.

### Requirements

Attendance: You are encouraged to attend Monday's class live, but you are also welcome to listen to it at your convenience, provided you do so prior to Wednesday's class. Unless it is impossible, attendance in small-group sessions (aka "Wednesday classes") should be treated as mandatory.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments are substantive in depth and in heft, but we have done our best to limit them to no more than 150 required pages per week. It is essential that you do the reading.

Class Participation: We hope that you are in a position to attend class and to actively participate. “On Mondays” (i.e. when we are all together), we will frequently welcome your participation on chat. “Wednesdays” (i.e. when we are in small groups) will be discussion based. If you are on zoom for small group, it would be exceedingly welcome were you to have your camera on though we understand that a variety of circumstances sometimes make this difficult.

Reading Response Posts: You will find your reading response assignments on Blackboard under “Discussion Board.” Every week, you are to post twice, once as an original post, and once as a substantive response to a classmates’ post. Your original post is due by midnight Tuesday night, and your response post is due by Wednesday morning at 10:00 a.m. There is no penalty for late posts.

Original posts should be in the ballpark of 250 words and will probably take roughly 30 minutes to complete. Response posts may be much shorter, but they should also be substantive. In early weeks, your instructors will model the sort of engagement that we are looking for.

You are free to use 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 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. Pose a question or two provoked by your thinking about this category that you might wish to tackle in class.

Exams: You will have two exams: a midterm and a final. Exams will be open book and untimed. Each will have two components. Part I will consist of term identifications. A week in advance of each exam you will be given a list of candidate terms drawn from the readings and from handouts, lectures, and discussions. You will be given 12 terms and asked to identify 10. Part II will consist of essays. For the midterm, you will be given three essay questions and be asked to answer two (750 words each). For the essay on the final exam, you will be asked either to present a blue print for ending mass incarceration (or some goal of comparable scope) or to design a project to ameliorate some facet of carcerality in your community (1,500 words).

Community engagement: This is a community-engaged course and is generously supported with a course operating grant from the good folks at the Rochester Center for Community Engagement. Pursuant to RCCE’s criteria, the course exposes students to issues of inequality or unmet needs in community, and course material is taught in collaboration with community partners. Under this rubric, it is our hope to foster opportunities for community engagement with partner organizations outside of class time. Because of a variety of Covid-related limitations, we are keeping this structure intentionally loose. We will be bringing in organizers from local and state-level community organizations (both synchronously and asynchronously), and will be sharing opportunities for engagement as these opportunities arise. Confirmed community organizations include Center for Community Alternatives, Free the People Rochester, New Hour, Parole Restoration Project, Release Aging People in Prison (RAPP), United Lutheran Church, and the UR Abolition Coalition.

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

### **On teaching and learning during a pandemic**

Classroom communities tend to be somewhat attenuated affairs. We perform our required roles; a good deal remains out of view. People struggle; people hurt. Sometimes others know what's up; mostly we don't. Covid affords us the opportunity to do an ethical reset one notch in the direction of mutual care. Even if you are lucky, and you remain healthy, and your loved ones remain healthy, we understand that you are living in an impossible situation. In similar and different ways, your instructors are also living through an impossible situation. Inevitably, things will sometimes not always go as one might hope. It is an article of faith in this space that every one of us is doing the very best we can under the circumstances. If you have special needs that we may be in a position to meet; please ask us—you will find us to be accommodating. If you have special needs that we can't possibly meet but you want us to know about them; please tell us—you will find us to be compassionate. If your preference is to tell us nothing, and to keep this relationship professionally distanced—you will find us to be respectful. Come what may, *we know that you are doing the very best that you can under the circumstances.*

### 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 College Writing Program:

<http://writing.rochester.edu/index.html>

\* Should you require special accommodations, please coordinate this through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) to ensure you have equal access to course content and requirements.

<http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/>

### **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 grants from the Central New York Humanities Corridor and the Rochester Center for Community Engagement.

February 1                      Introductions

#### Unit I                              The Carceral Modern

February 3                      Frank Schmallegger, *Criminal Justice*, 250-254\*  
Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 9-21\*  
Recommended: Timothy Crimmins, "Incarceration as Incapacitation: An Intellectual History"\*

February 8                      Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 195-228\*

Caleb Smith, *The Prison in the American Imagination*, 1-23\*

- February 10 Norman Johnson, *Forms of Constraint*, 67-87, 174-177\*  
Recommended: Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction*, 73-101, 197-201\*  
Recommended: Rebecca McClennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment*, 53-86\*
- February 15 Sarah Haley, *No Mercy Here*, 17-57, 263-269\*  
Nicole Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*, 93-132\*  
Recommended: Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 35-87\*
- February 17 Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 1-15, 221-228\*  
Recommended: Stuart Schrader, *Badges without Borders*, 1-25, 281-290\*
- February 19, 7:00 pm **Jalil Muntaqim**
- Unit II Mass Incarceration and/or the Prison Industrial Complex
- February 22 Michelle Alexander, *New Jim Crow*, 20-57, 251-255\*  
James Forman, Jr., *Locking Up Our Own*, 3-46\*  
Recommended: Ava DuVernay (dir.) *13<sup>th</sup>* [On Netflix]
- February 24 Marie Gottschalk, *Caught*, 1-22, 285-293\*  
Mona Lynch, “Mass Incarceration, Legal Change, and Locale”\*
- March 1 **Guests:** Judy Clark (RAPP) and Cheryl Wilkins, (Justice-in-Education)  
Readings TBD
- March 3 Study Break: NO CLASS
- March 8 Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*, 11-98  
Recommended: Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag*, 1-17\*
- March 10 Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*, 99-192  
Recommended: Loic Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor*, 41-75, 326-331\*
- March 15 **Guests:** Ashley Gantt, Indy Maring, and Stanley Martin (Free the People ROC)  
Readings TBD
- March 17 Jackie Wang, *Carceral Capitalism*, 193-322
- March 24 Brett Story (dir), *The Prison in 12 Landscapes*
- March 26 **Midterm due in class**
- Unit III Toward the abolitionist horizon
- March 29 Schenwar and Law, *Prison by any other Name*, ix-85
- March 31 Schenwar and Law, 87-140

- April 5                   **Guests:** Michelle Lewin and Anthony Dixon (Parole Preparation Project)  
Schenwar and Law, 141-242  
Other readings TBD
- April 7                   Schenwar and Law, 197-242
- April 12                  Judith Levine and Erica Meiners, *The Feminist and the Sex Offender*, 1-83
- April 14                  Levine and Meiners, 157-185  
Recommended: Levine and Meiners, 87-153
- April 19                  **Guests:** Marvin Mayfield & Katie Schaffer (Center for Community Alternatives)  
Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Change Everything*, TBD  
Other readings, TBD
- April 21                  Gilmore, TBD
- April 26                  Gilmore, TBD
- April 28                  Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, TBD
- May 3                    **Guests:** Rev Lewis Stewart and Kerrie Gantt (Impact of Incarceration on  
Families & Monroe County Alliance for Transformation of Policing)  
  
Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, TBD  
Other readings, TBD
- May 5                    Mariame Kaba, *We Do This 'Til We Free Us*, TBD
- May 10                   **Final due by 5:00 pm**

\* Available on blackboard under Course Materials