Imprisonment (SOCIOL / SOCPSY 3RR3)

Term 2, Winter 2021

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# Course Description

This course will introduce students to the history, politics, and consequences of incarceration in North America and abroad. We will examine why and how we have punished in the past, the reasons and methods for punishment in contemporary society, and how punishment is experienced by people housed in prisons and those released back into society. Using “the prison” as our unit of analysis, we will tackle both theoretical and substantive issues around incarceration and explore questions such as: 1) What is the relationship between incarceration and class, race, ethnicity, gender, and age? 2) What determines the scope of incarceration and what impact does it have on those housed in prisons, their families, and the communities they come from? 3) How do prisons contribute to the growing penalization of poverty in modern society? 4) How do we go about studying prisons, and what are the strengths and limitations of various approaches?

# Course Objectives

By the end of the course, students will have learned about:

* The politics, history, and collateral consequences of incarceration
* How we punish and the multiple (and often contradictory) aims of incarceration
* The racial, ethnic, and gendered aspects of who we incarcerate
* The overlap between victims and offenders
* The prisoner society, prison codes, and how prisons operate
* Correctional officer culture, discretion, and the dynamics of authority in a total institution
* How to improve their writing and analytical skills
* How to think critically about research and media depictions of prisons and those currently and formerly housed in these spaces.

# Required Materials and Texts

Course material will consist primarily of lectures, journal articles, book chapters, and audio/visual resources (e.g., documentaries, podcasts, short video clips, etc.). All of this material will be organized and available to you on Avenue to Learn. If you are unable to access the website, please contact your instructor to enroll you. Please check the website frequently for class announcements and other important information.

*N.B. Students should be aware that, when accessing electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor*

# Class Format

This class will be delivered through a mix of asynchronous and synchronous components. I will post weekly, pre-recorded lectures on Avenue to Learn every Friday by 2:30pm, and you can view these lectures at your leisure. I will be holding virtual “office hours” every Friday from 4:30–5:20pm via Zoom. Our TA will be holding officer hours on Mondays from 10:00–11:00am, where you can ask questions about the readings, assignments, and lecture material. If you would like to schedule a meeting, please email us and we will send you a personalized Zoom link. We will also host a few “pop-in Zoom sessions” throughout the term, which will be optional but a great way to connect with your instructor, TA, and other students in the course—more details on this to follow.

# Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Midterm Test (25%): Friday, February 26th, 2021
2. Group Video Presentation (15%): Friday, March 12th, 2021.
3. Review Essay (35%): Friday, April 9th, 2021.
4. Final Exam (25%): TBD by Registrar (\*This is final test for the course)

# Course Evaluation – Details

## Test 1 (25%), Friday, February 26th, 2021

This test will consist of multiple-choice questions. It will assess your knowledge of the lecture material, assigned readings, and audio/visual materials for WEEKS 1 to 5 of the course. It will be held on Avenue to Learn from 2:30–4:20pm on Friday, February 26th, 2021. More detailed information about the structure of the test will be communicated to you via email.

## Group Presentation (15%), Friday, March 12th, 2021

In Week 2, you will be assigned a “presentation group,” which will consist of a total of 5 students (alternatively, you can choose your own group members). This will be your team for the group presentation, which is due by 11:59pm on Friday, March 12th, 2021. This assignment requires that you work together on a course-related topic of your choosing (more details about these topics to follow). After collectively deciding on a topic, your group will then be responsible for delegating tasks, reviewing relevant literature, creating presentation slides (e.g., PowerPoint or Keynote), and delivering a presentation using Zoom. The presentations should be approximately 15 minutes long. I realize not everyone is comfortable with public speaking, so I will not be asking you to present to your classmates live; instead, you will be asked to submit a Zoom recording of your group presentation, which will be viewed by myself and the TA for grading. More detailed information about this assignment will be shared via Avenue to Learn (in Week 2) and will be discussed during my recorded lectures. As an aside: this group can also serve as your “social network” throughout the course. One of the many challenges of online learning is that it can be isolating, with students having little contact with each other and/or their instructors. These “presentation groups” are a way for you to stay connected to other students in the course—talk to each other, work with each other, and help each other out.

## Review Essay (35%), Friday, April 9th, 2021

This paper will be a “review essay,” where you will examine a single imprisonment-related question. For example, you may want to answer: What are the causes of mass incarceration in the US? What has led to the overincarceration of particular racial and ethnic groups in North America? What challenges are unique to women prisoners? How is order and control maintained within prison? This essay should not only summarize the existing literature on your topic, but also evaluate it, take a stance, and suggest directions for future research. I will provide a more comprehensive list of potential topics for you to choose from in Week 4 (or you can pick your own topic, with the TA’s approval). Your essay should not exceed 1500 words, excluding title page and references. More detailed information about this assignment will be shared via Avenue to Learn and will be discussed during my recorded lectures.

## Final Exam (25%), TBD by Registrar

This examination will consist of multiple-choice questions. It will assess your knowledge of the lecture material, assigned readings, and audio/visual materials for WEEKS 7 to 13 of the course. It will be held on Avenue to Learn and will be scheduled by the Registrar’s Office. More detailed information about the structure of the final exam will be communicated to you via email.

# Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

## Week 1 (Friday, January 15)

### Introduction to the Course & The Birth of the Prison

Readings:

Rubin, A. 2018. “Prison History.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Criminology*, pp. 1-32.

*\*VIDEO*: Rubin, A. 2019. *A Brief History of Prisons*. TED Talk

## Week 2 (Friday, January 22)

### Why We Punish

Readings:

Garland, D. 1990. *Punishment & Modern Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, “Chapter 11: Punishment as a Cultural Agent.”

*\*VIDEO*: Garland, D. 2020. “Roots of Injustice: The Structural Sources of America’s Penal State.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference.*

## Week 3 (Friday, January 29)

### Mass Incarceration: Causes

Readings:

Garland, D. 2001. “Introduction: The Meaning of Mass Imprisonment.”   
*Punishment and Society,* 3(1): 5-7.

Western, B., 2006. *Punishment and Inequality in America*. Russell Sage Foundation. “Chapter 1: Mass Imprisonment,” pp. 11-33.

***\*****VIDEO:* Eason, J. 2020. “In Our Backyard: How the prison boom transformed America.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference.*

## Week 4 (Friday, February 5)

### Mass Incarceration: Consequences

Readings:

Comfort, M. 2007. “Punishment Beyond the Legal Offender.” *Annual   
Review of Law and Social Science* 3: 271-296.

Pager, D. 2003. “The Mark of a Criminal Record.” *American Journal of Sociology*, *108*(5): 937-975.

## Week 5 (Friday, February 12)

### The Pains of Imprisonment & Human Rights Issues

Readings:

Crewe, B. 2011. “Depth, weight, tightness: Revisiting the pains of imprisonment.” *Punishment & Society,* 13(5): 509-529

Gawande, A. 2009. “Hellhole: The United States holds tens of thousands of inmates in long-term solitary confinement. Is this torture?” *The New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2009/03/30/hellhole> (Please use this link)

*\*VIDEO*: Rovner, L. 2019. “Why US Prisons Need to Abolish Solitary Confinement.” *TED Talk*

## Week 6 (Friday, February 19)

### \*Mid-Term Recess – No Class\*

## Week 7 (Friday, February 26), *\*MIDTERM TEST\**

### Correctional Officers, Social Order, & Control Inside Prisons

Readings:

Liebling, A. 2000. “Prison Officer, Policing, and the Use of Discretion.” *Theoretical Criminology, 4*(3): 333-357.

Haggerty, K. and Bucerius, S. 2020. “Picking Battles: Correctional Officers, Rules, and Discretion in Prison. *Criminology*. Online First

*\*VIDEO*: Schultz, W. 2020. “‘I Feel Vulnerable’: Re-assessing the causes of perceived vulnerability among correctional officers.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference*.

## Week 8 (Friday, March 5)

### Incarceration & Social Inequality

Readings:

Beckett, K. and Western, B. 2001. “Governing Social Marginality: Welfare, Incarceration, and the Transformation of State Policy.” *Punishment & Society,* 3: 43-59.

Wacquant, L. 2001. “Deadly Symbiosis: When Ghetto and Prison Meet and Mesh.” *Punishment & Society*, 3(1): 95-133.

*\*VIDEO*: Goffman, A. 2015. “How we’re priming some kids for college and others for prison.” *TED Talk.*

## Week 9 (Friday, March 12), *\*DUE: GROUP PRESENTATION\**

### Lived Experiences of Incarceration

Readings:

Walker, M. 2016. “Race Making in a Penal Institution.” *American Journal of Sociology,* 121(4): 1051-1078.

*\*VIDEO:* Sean, Teresa, and Cynthia. 2020. “Lived Experiences of Incarceration Panel.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference.*

## Week 10 (Friday, March 19)

### Race & Imprisonment

Readings:

Alexander, M. 2010. *The New Jim Crow.* New York: New Press. “Introduction,” pp. 1-19.

Chartrand, V. 2019. Unsettled times: Indigenous incarceration and the links between colonialism and the penitentiary in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice,* 61(3): 67-89.

Tetrault, J. E., Bucerius, S. & Haggerty, K. 2020. Multiculturalism under confinement: Prisoner race relations inside western Canadian Prisons. *Sociology*, 54(3): 534-555.

*\*VIDEO*: Walker, M. 2020. “‘Who’s Your Rep?: A social exchange perspective on control.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference*.

## Week 11 (Friday, March 26)

### Women’s Imprisonment

Readings:

Kruttschnitt, C. 2011. “Women’s Prisons.” In *Oxford Handbook of Crime and Criminal Justice,* Ed. M. Tonry. Oxford University Press, pp. 897-924.

Bucerius, S., Haggerty, K., & Dunford, D. 2020. “Prison as Temporary Refuge: Amplifying the Voices of Women Detained in Prison.” *The British Journal of Criminology*, Online First

\**VIDEO*: Bucerius, S. 2020. “Prisons as a Temporary Refuge.” *TED Talk*

## Week 12 (Friday, April 2)

### \*Good Friday – No Class\*

## Week 13 (Friday, April 9), *\*DUE: ESSAY\**

### Rehabilitation, Reentry, & Reintegration

Readings:

Morenoff, Jeffrey D. and David J. Harding (2014) “Incarceration, prisoner reentry and communities.” *Annual Review of Sociology,* 40: 411-429

Western, B. 2018. Homeward: Life in the Year After Prison. New York: Russel Sage Foundation, ‘Chapter 3: Transitions,” pp. 26-45.

*\*VIDEO:* Maier, K. 2020. “Halfway houses, supervision, and the organizational dimensions of reentry in Canada.” *Prisons and Punishment Conference.*

*\*This schedule and list of materials is subject to change by the instructor.*

# Course Policies

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-90 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |

## Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically to Turnitin.com and in hard copy so that it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please to go [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

# University Policies

## Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s *Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities* policy.

## Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.