

Comparative Crime and Punishment, Spring 2018
Criminal Justice 496
Mon and Thurs, 10:55am-12:15pm Hickman 205

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The United States has the highest incarceration rate in the democratic world, and imprisonment falls disproportionately on racial minorities and the poor. Why is this? Is there something distinctive about American culture, politics or society that produces these outcomes? Are we simply a more crime-prone people, a more punitive people, a more racist people, that willfully impose exceptionally harmful sanctions on even low-level offenders?

In this class, we will explore the US case in a comparative context, seeking to understand variation in imprisonment in democratic countries. In order to do this, we will seek to understand what factors contribute to imprisonment, how and with what consequences crime becomes a political issue and what extremely high rates of violence and incarceration can tell us about politics and inequality more generally in the United States, compared to other democratic countries.

The course has four main requirements: class participation, in-class midterm, book analysis and a final paper.

Reading and assignments

Required readings

There are no required textbooks. All readings are articles on Sakai, as well as data sets and analyses that we will review and discuss.

Each week has a set of questions, which you should come to class prepared to answer. Whether you do all of the readings and review all of the data sources, or focus more selectively on answers to the week's questions is up to you. Some weeks ask general questions and some are more specific to the assigned readings. The point is to *do your work before class and come prepared to answer the week's questions*, and to be able to reference the sources of your information.

Assignments

Participation (20%): Class participation has two components. First, students are required to post questions about the readings *prior* to class a minimum of ten times throughout the semester (10%). Second, I expect students to be prepared to answer questions in class and offer reflections and synthesis about class material (10%).

Midterm (25%): This is an in-class exam that involves several short answer questions addressing facts about crime and imprisonment cross-nationally, as well as a longer essay question addressing some of the theories that explain these realities.

Book analysis (20%): This assignment involves selecting a book from the suggested reading list or a different book that is approved by me. You may not use a book you are reading for another class just because it has something to do with crime or criminal justice! It must relate to this class and I

will make that determination. I will provide more information in class but there are two crucial elements of a book review. First, a clear and cogent summary of the book's main arguments and, second, an incisive assessment of them. The second part is particularly challenging. I will post some book reviews on the Sakai site as example and will discuss them more in class. The length is 4-6 pages.

Final paper (35%): Due Monday, May 7th. This is a 10-12 page paper that addresses the primary class theme: what explains high rates of imprisonment in the US? The paper will draw primarily on class material, as well as the outside book you read, as well as presentation of data comparing the US on crime (violence) and imprisonment with two other countries. We will discuss details on the paper in class.

Suggested readings for book review

Barker, Vanessa. 2009. *The Politics of Imprisonment: How the Democratic Process Shapes the Way America Punishes Offenders*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Butterfield, Fox. 1995. *All God's Children: The Bosket Family and the American Tradition of Violence*. New York: Vintage Books.

English, T.J. 2011. *The Savage City: Race, Murder and a Generation on the Edge*. New York: Harper Collins.

Fortner, Michael Javen. 2015. *Black Silent Majority: The Rockefeller Drug Laws and the Politics of Punishment*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Francis, Megan. 2014. *Civil Rights and the Making of the Modern American State*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Garland, David. 2010. *Peculiar Institution: America's death penalty in the age of abolition*. Belknap Press.

Gottschalk, Marie. 2015. *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Gottschalk, Marie. 2006. *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Green, David. 2008. *When Children Kill: Penal populism and political culture*. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.

Hinton, Elizabeth. 2015. *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kleiman, Mark A.R. 2009. *When Brute Force Fails: How to have less crime and less punishment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Lacey, Nicola. 2008. *The Prisoner's Dilemma: Political Economy and Punishment in Contemporary Democracies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Murakawa, Naomi. 2014. *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Roberts, Julian V., Loretta J. Stalans, David Indermaur and Mike Hough. 2003. *Penal Populism and Public Opinion: Lessons from Five Countries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Roth, Randall. 2009. *American Homicide*. Boston: Harvard University Press.
- Scheingold, Stuart. 1984. *The Politics of Law and Order*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Simon, Jonathan. 2007. *Governing through crime: How the war on crime transformed American democracy and created a culture of fear*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tonry, Michael. 2007. *Crime, Punishment and Politics in Comparative Perspective*. Crime and Justice, A Review of Research, Vol. 36. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Tonry, Michael and Tappio Lappi-Seppala. 2012. *Crime and Justice in Scandanavia*. Crime and Justice, A Review of Research, Vol. 40. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Western, Bruce, *Punishment and Inequality in America*. 2006. New York: Russell Sage.
- Whitman, James. *Harsh Justice: Criminal Punishment and the Widening Divide between America and Europe*. New York: Oxford UP, 2003.
- Wilson, James Q. 1975 (new edition in 2013). *Thinking about crime*. New York: Basic Books.
- Zimring, Frank E., Gordon Hawkins and Sam Kamin. 2001. *Punishment and Democracy: Three Strikes You're Out in California*. New York: Oxford University Press.