**School & Punishment**  
**Sociology 350**  
Instructor: Christi M. Smith  
Office: King Building 301B  
Office Hours: Thursdays, 4-6pm or by appointment

Meeting Place: King 123  
Meeting Time: 11:00-11:50 a.m.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course examines two important social institutions: schools and prisons. Rhetorically, schools and prisons have both been designed to cure social ills and instill morals, habits of industry, and discipline the citizenry. Schools are once again deeply segregated by race and class, and recently even the White House has recognized ‘mass incarceration’ as a social and political problem. Both have been – and remain - key sites for activists, reformers, and policy-makers. In understanding waves of reform impacting schools and prisons, we explore how the broader socio-political context – that is, political opportunity structures and social movements – have shaped the emergence and structure of these institutions over the past 150 years. This class will devote substantial time to contemporary education and prison reform in international-comparative perspective and through multiple theoretical perspectives.

**REQUIRED TEXTS** (Ferguson & Muhammad available at the Oberlin College Bookstore):


*Note: this is an edited volume. Readings in this text are marked “in Polakow”

**OPTIONAL TEXTS**: We read several chapters from these books. I have scanned them and posted them on Blackboard. If it is more cost effective to purchase used copies than to print out copies, please do so. You will need print copies in class in some form.


**ADDITIONAL READINGS**: Articles and other short readings are posted on blackboard. See “Resources and Readings.” On the main page, you will find supplementary materials (videos, policy documents, non-profit groups, links to respected research centers, etc.). See the sub-heading “Readings” (in green) for peer-reviewed journal articles.
**COURSE EXPECTATIONS:**

*Participation:* Please do arrive on time, turn your cell phone off (not to vibrate), listen and respond to others. Ask classmates (and me) to clarify comments and provide evidence to support their contributions. To do this, bring your texts, reading notes and discussion questions.

*Readings:* It is very important that you read all assigned materials well in advance of the class where they are assigned. It is strongly encouraged that you print out and bring readings to class.

I encourage you to write brief summaries of each reading for your own benefit. These should include: how this reading pertains to earlier research (why was this author motivated to address this particular question? What is this reading arguing against? A theory? A change in methodology or data?), the main argument, a quick description of the evidence (data) used to make that argument, and the findings. Take time to consider how the readings compare – do they use similar research strategies? Do authors address similar questions? Can you cluster certain readings thematically?

*Discussion Memos:* Please write out 3 questions that you would like to discuss. These may be about a single reading, or – even better – may connect multiple readings. You should have page numbers that you can use to direct us to the passage(s) you wish to raise for discussion. Please post these on Blackboard by noon the day before class. While you need not post for each class meeting, please post at least weekly. These will be the basis for your participation grade. There is not a hard and fast rule here. These are your chance to demonstrate your investment in the course.

*Analytical Essays:* On four occasions, you will write analytical essays. (see below)

**ASSESSMENT**

Participation: 10% (being prepared with discussion memos, present, and involved) = 10 points

Analytical Essays: 50% = 50 points

(3 essays of 1200-1300 words = 10 points each, 1 extended essay of 1500-1600 words= 20 points)

Project Proposal: 40% = 40 points

= 100 points for the semester

**Details:**

Analytical Essays should incorporate the readings from the designated section of the course. I will post the writing prompt on Blackboard in advance of the due date. You may choose which of the essays you will to write as your extended essay, based on your interests and/or schedule. You should turn in your analytical essay no later than one week after that section of the course has ended.

Project Proposal: You may choose to write a proposal for an academic project (say, an honors thesis or other research project) or an academic essay (without an empirical research component) or a policy proposal (grounded in sociological literature). This decision is yours. You should, however, commit to one of these forms by mid-October.

**TURNING IN ASSIGNMENTS**

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day they are assigned. Assignments should be printed (double-sided) with your name, the course number, assignment title and page numbers on each page.

Please use Times New Roman, 11 font, standard margins.

Handwritten assignments will NOT be accepted.
GENERAL GUIDELINES AND POLICIES

Late Policy: I strongly suggest you complete and print all assignments the night before class, if not earlier. If you need to discuss turning in an assignment at an alternate time, we should meet at least 7 days prior to the due date. I will not accept analytical essays more than 1 week late. I will grade late assignments more harshly because you will have had the additional advantage of time.

Attendance Policy:
*** If you do not plan to attend regularly, you should not take this class. I expect that you attend class, and that you arrive prepared and invested.
In the event that you do miss a class, you will be responsible for the material covered and all announcements made in class. You do not need to inform me about missing class or provide an excuse – regardless of the reason.

College Sanctioned Absences
If you intend to miss class for a college-sanctioned event (such as religious holidays or student athlete events) you should notify me within the first two weeks of the semester and provide the appropriate documentation. If these absences coincide with an important class event is imperative that I know about these absences in advance so that we may make special arrangements to make up activities in a way that is fair to all students. If you miss for a college-sanctioned reason, you are responsible for understanding the material.

Incompletes
I will not grant an incomplete except in cases with exceptionally unusual circumstances.

Doing Well
I encourage you to have a notebook dedicated for this course.
Use office hours – come see me. Office hours are a good place to discuss your individual needs as they relate to this course. If you want to discuss topics that I think you should share with the class, I will ask you to do so.
Take advantage of campus resources!

WHY TAKE HANDWRITTEN NOTES? It is to your advantage to take notes during class and it is my goal to help you learn to take notes in ways that enhance your learning.
Here’s some advice borrowed from Princeton’s students support staff: (http://www.princeton.edu/mcgraw/library/for-students/great-notes/)
You can maximize what you learn in and from lecture by following three easy steps:

1) adopt active listening skills;

2) take clear, effective notes; and

3) review your notes within 24 hours of taking them.
Listen actively in lecture

(1. Take notes to be more present in class)

- **Get to class early** so that you can choose a seat free of distractions and close to the lecturer.
- **Look over your notes from last time** and prepare for the day's lecture, anticipating themes, concepts, and ideas that the lecturer will likely present.
- **Listen both for main ideas** and for the **relevant details** supporting them.
- **Pay particular attention** when the lecturer is analyzing, synthesizing, or processing information for you, such as when she makes a list, notes cause and effect, uses superlatives, or spends a lot of time explaining something.
- **Ask questions** when you don’t understand something.

Take good notes during lecture using the Cornell Method of Note taking

(2. Take notes in a way that sets you up to listen and contribute effectively to class)

- Using only one side of your paper, draw a vertical line a few inches from the left side of the paper and a horizontal line a few inches up from the bottom of the page. (See example below.)
- **Take legible notes** in the central portion of your paper. Don’t transcribe every word that the lecturer says. Rather, focus on main ideas, themes, and concepts, taking down only those details, examples, illustrations, or formulae that will help you to remember the central point(s) of the lecture.
- **Use consistent, understandable abbreviations** whenever possible.
- **Skip lines to indicate transitions** from one thought or idea to the next.
- **Leave noticeable blanks** for words, ideas, or dates that you didn’t catch but can fill in later.
- **Put question marks in the left-hand margin** to indicate that you should do further investigation on this section of your notes, either on your own or by going to office hours.

Fill in and review notes after lecture

(3. Take notes to help you study more effectively)

- **Review your notes within 24 hours** of taking them. Students forget 50% of what they learn if they don’t review within 24 hours.
- **Fill in any blanks** you left and answer any questions you may have from lecture.
- Use the left-hand margin to **annotate your notes** indicating key terms, concepts, dates, and any other important information that will help you to review for exams or write papers.
- Use the bottom margin to **write a summary** of each page of notes—or, if it makes more sense, summarize at the end of one set of lecture notes.

Following these steps will help you to store information in your long-term memory and better learn your course material the first time around.
Special Needs
Students with special needs should inform me within the first two weeks of class and provide appropriate documentation from university services. I will do my best to insure that you have what you need to do your best in this course. [http://new.oberlin.edu/office/disability-services/]

Honor Code
http://www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/honorcode.html
The Honor Code: Oberlin College students are on their honor to uphold a high degree of academic integrity. All work that students submit is expected to be of their own creation and give proper credit to the ideas and work of others. When students write and sign the Honor Pledge, they are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information, nor assisted others in these actions.

Honor Pledge: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment."
Sign each assignment—it is your reminder to know the boundaries of cheating (not doing your own work) plagiarism (taking credit for someone else’s work) and fabrication (making up sources, quotations or observations).

If you feel hesitant or if you are tempted to plagiarize, come see me.

It is not possible for us to have an intellectual community without honor. I expect that you demonstrate respect by recognizing the labor of those who create scholarly works.

If you cheat (and this includes plagiarism/ not citing sources), your final grade will be an F. You will be reported. Ignorance is not an excuse.

How to get in touch:
Preferred: Office hours/ lingering after class
Email: When sending an email, include the course number and quick description of your inquiry in the subject line.
Please note that I will try to respond to emails within 24 hours on weekdays and I will do my best to answer all emails in a timely manner. I will not check my email between 7pm-8am on weekdays. I may or may not respond to emails over the weekend. In other words, plan ahead.
Please check Blackboard/ syllabus before sending an email to make sure that the information you need is not available.
Learning time management is part of a college education. So too, is this illusive idea of work-life balance.
Unannounced Pop-ins: If it is a general question, I recommend checking with your classmates before emailing me. If you want to pop by my office, here is the code: door ajar – please knock/ door closed – busy.
**Note: If something is wrong with a reading (a broken link, a damaged file) email me and let me know ASAP!
**In Class Etiquette:**
This is an upper-level course. I hope you have enrolled because you want to be here. We will confront emotionally difficult topics and in a time when there is increased attention to issues of racial injustice. I anticipate that you will be thoughtful and patient (with me, with each other, with yourself) about how we talk about the material covered in this course, recognizing that we cannot know how our words and what we read will impact others without honest dialogue. As a country, we need places and spaces where we can talk about difficult matters in ways that are honest and thorough. Let’s do all we can to make this class one such space, and remain hopeful that in developing our abilities to facilitate difficult discussions we can foster more of these conversations – on campus and when we are far from Oberlin.

In pursuit of that goal, please also respect the following:
No need to raise your hand - Look around. Be on time (or early!) Learn names. Be kind.

Any use of cell phones is prohibited during class. **Please turn your cell phone off** or put it on silent mode without light, vibration and sound. *(I find it painfully irritating when students text in class. I may not be able to be kind to people who text.)*

Please do arrive on time.

Ask classmates (and me) to clarify comments and provide evidence to support their contributions. To do this, bring your texts, reading notes, and discussion questions.

You’ll likely see news stories that touch on issues we cover in this course. Please bring these to our attention at the end of class or post them to the discussion board.

**Class Dinners:** We will also have a few class dinners over the course of the semester. I will announce these two weeks in advance. Dinners will be held at Wilder, Stevenson, or Lord/Saunders Afrikan Heritage House. These will give us the chance to talk more informally and get to know each other better.
COURSE SCHEDULE:
{Please find guided reading questions posted each week on Blackboard.}

INTRODUCTION

“Many do not, we image, fully realize the issues of our democratic theories – see clearly the radical distinction between the American and the old world idea of government. Such discrimination is essential to conscious citizenship. The duties of maintaining and continually improving our public schools system cannot be too strongly urged upon the public attention.”
- Education & Public Schools
  The Chicago Tribune, May 20, 1865

“We need to distinguish between who we’re mad at and who we’re afraid of.”
- Kentucky Legislator John Tilley

“Incarceration has become the response to every social problem we have.”
- Kentucky Commissioner of Juvenile Justice Hasan Davis


M 08/31: Welcome!

W 09/02: Kids Who Die: A Tribute to the Movement (Narrated by Danny Glove, poem by Langston Hughes)
  Geertz, “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”
  Note: yellow = key points; green = questions to consider

F 09/04: MEET at Allen Art Museum at 11 am. Please bring pencils (no pens!) and paper for note taking and leave their outerwear and bags in the lockers/on the coat hooks. We'll meet in the main foyer.
  This is the exhibit we will view:
  http://www.oberlin.edu/amam/Transformation.html

M 09/07: Labor Day – No class


CONVOCATION: Bryan Stevenson’s Talk (7:30 Finney Chapel 9)
Please discuss his address with friends and bring your notes to class on Friday

F 09/11: Discussion of Bryan Stevenson’s Convocation address.


Childress, Sarah. “Justice Department Probes Another “School-to-Prison Pipeline,” PBS Frontline. April 1, 2015

USDOJ Findings Regarding Department of Justice Investigation of Lauderdale County Youth Court, Meridian Police Department, and Mississippi Division of Youth Services.” (posted as “USDOJ Findings Lauderdale Meridian Mississippi”)

THE EMERGENCE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE


Polawkow, Foreward and Chapter 1: “A Crucible of Contradictions: Historical Roots of Violence Against Children in the United States (pps. 1 -40)


F 09/18: In class: PBS Frontline Prison State (WL)
Outside of Class - Finish PBS Frontline Prison State


W 09/23: No Class – Yom Kippur
THE EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY OF CONSTRUCTING SOCIAL PROBLEMS


W 09/30: James Baldwin, “A Talk to Teachers" (1963)


THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE CHALLENGES OF INTERVENTION


Ward, Ch.5, Uplifting Black Citizens Delinquent: The Vanguard Movement, 1900-1930(pps 127-161)

**Note: I have invited alumni from the Oberlin Alumni Association of Africana Ancestry to join us as part of their reunion weekend.

M 10/05 Muhammad, Ch. 2 “Writing Crime into Culture” and Ch. 3 “Incriminating Culture”

W 10/07 Garland, Introduction and Ch. 1 (skim) pps. 1- 21, Ch. 2 “Punishment and Social Solidarity”

Case & Haines, “Children first, Offenders Second: Model from the United Kingdom”

INSIDE PRISONS

F 10/09: Terre Haute Federal Correction Materials (archival); US Bioethics report, “Ethically Impossible” pps. 9-25 (WL)
M 10/12: Garland, Ch. 8 "The Rationalization of Punishment: Weberian Themes and Modern Penalty"; See web resources “Auburn State Correctional Facility” and “Eastern State Penitentiary”

**select International Comparison Country (in class/ discuss on Friday)**


F 10/16: Incarceration in International Comparison: “Prison Planet” (WL)

--- FALL RECESS: OCTOBER 17-25---

INSIDE SCHOOLS: THE MECHANICS OF LEARNING AND PUNISHING

M 10/26: Garland, Ch. 12 “Punishment as a Social Institution”


W 10/28: Ferguson Ch1 “don’t believe the hype” (always read accompanying fieldnotes with chapters) and Polakow, Ch 4 (pps. 78-99);

F 10/30: Ferguson Ch. 2 “the punishing room”; Polakow Ch 5, “America’s Least Wanted”

M 11/02: Ferguson, Ch. 3 “school rules” and Ch. 4 “naughty by nature”

W 11/04: Polakow, Ch 6; Review “Schooltoprison.org” for resources and ideas; ACLU Weblink (WL): What is the School to Prison Pipeline? (including factsheet)

F 11/06: Ferguson, Ch.5 “mothering” and Ch. 6 “getting in trouble”

M 11/09: Ferguson, Ch. 7 “getting in trouble” and 8 “unreasonable circumstances”

W 11/11: Project Meeting: Proposal-Writing Workshop

*Your projects may also serve as a basis for your application to the President’s Public Service Fellowship. Please reach out Tania Boster from the Bonner Center for
Service and Learning for additional support if you are interested in this terrific opportunity!

**F 11/13: No Class.** (I will be out of town for a conference Nov. 12-15)


**MAKING SOCIOLOGICAL SENSE OF MASS INCARCERATION**


Short Pieces: Hancock, “Why Are Finland’s Schools Successful?” (please view pictures on article web-page) and “Smithsonian Finland” (WL)


W11/25: Project Meetings

--- THANKSGIVING RECESS: NOVEMBER 26-29 ---

**GETTING OUT AND GETTING ON?**

Glenn Loury, Tanner Lecture: “Ghettos, Prisons and Racial Stigma: Ethics and Economics”

W 12/02 Scott, Greg. 2004. “It's a sucker's outfit': How urban gangs enable and impede the reintegration of ex-convicts” Ethnography 5(1) : 107-140


F 12/11: Ferguson, Ch. 8 "dreams"

---READING PERIOD: DECEMBER 12-15---

*Recommendations for future reading posted on Blackboard