**“You’ve Got Time”:**

**An Introduction to Prison and its Representation**

A First-Year Writing Seminar

PMA 1120

Tuesday and Thursday, 1:25 – 2:40 PM

106 Alice Cook House

Spring 2015

Instructor: Nick Fesette

Contact: nf234@cornell.edu

Office hours: Schwartz Center rm. 420 (4th floor), Tuesdays 3:00 – 5:00 PM and by appointment



**Course Description and Rationale**

This course focuses on the American penitentiary and “hyper-incarceration,” with a particular emphasis on the writings, performances, and cultural representations of incarcerated people. We will begin by discussing “why we care” about mass incarceration and prison reform, transition to close readings of prisoner artworks, and then analyze examples of the prison genre from film, television, and other media. At the same time, students will develop their critical, creative, and persuasive writing skills through peer and instructor review and a multi-draft essay process. From Jack Henry Abbott to *Orange is the New Black*, from *Cool Hand Luke* to Rhodessa Jones and The Medea Project, this course engages with the most profoundly “othered” space in American history and the humans who fall victim to its logics.

The selected readings and viewings will expose students to a broad range of cultural and theoretical objects, expanding their conceptions not only of who incarcerated people are, but also of what types of writing, performance, and media are valuable in the academy. Students will be encouraged to think critically about the questions the phenomenon of the penitentiary raises: about race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and other topics. We will examine how cultural representations effect social attitudes, and consider how these social attitudes in turn shape individuals and communities. Students will produce writing that creatively and compellingly engages with these questions and others, and by the end of the class will be well on the way to developing a working writing process and to possessing their own distinctive voice and style.

**Learning Outcomes**

This First-Year Writing Seminar will help you to produce writing that develops and demonstrates your competency in the following areas:  
  
*-Theses, arguments, organization, evidence, and language appropriate to the fields of performance and media.  
-The use and analysis of texts, performances, films, TV shows, and other media.  
-Citing sources appropriately and responsibly.  
-Active classroom participation in discussion and effective note-taking skills.  
-Thinking critically about the sociopolitical dimensions of art and culture.  
-Substantively engaging with critical prison studies.*

**Texts/Screenings**

All students should purchase the following texts:

Richard Bullock, Michal Brody, and Francine Weinberg, *The Little Seagull Handbook*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

Loic Wacquant, *Prisons of Poverty*

Ted Conover, *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*

Michelle Alexander, *New Jim Crow*

These texts have been ordered through the Campus Store, and should be shelved in the textbook area by our course number (PMA 1120). If you can’t find it, ask a staff member in the textbook area for assistance.

All other required readings/viewings/listening for this class will either be available through the course Blackboard site or handed out in class. All reading, viewing, listening, and writing assignments will be posted on the Blackboard site.

**Guidelines for Submission of Essay Assignments**

No hand-written work will be accepted; all essay assignments should be typed and emailed to me (nf234@cornell.edu) on or before the due date. This is because I do all of my grading electronically. I prefer Microsoft Word .doc files, but please speak with me if this is not possible for you. All essays should be formatted as follows:

*-Your name, net id, assignment title, and date displayed at the beginning of paper*

*-The title of your paper centered below this information*

*-Double-space your writing*

*-Use one-inch margins; left justify only*

*-Use a standard font (such as Times New Roman or Calibri) and 12-point size*

-*Please hit the spacebar only once after colons and periods*

*-Number each page*

**Grading Policy**

Your final grade for this class will be determined by the instructor based on the following components:

-*Attendance and Class Participation* (15%) – Students are required to attend all classes. If, for whatever reason, you cannot make a class, please email the instructor (nf234@cornell.edu) in advance to explain the reason for your absence. If you miss more than two classes or fail to explain an absence, your grade could be affected. You are responsible for completing all assignments, readings, responses, and deadlines, even if you have to be absent.

In addition to your required attendance, all students must participate actively in our class discussions and activities. I am not interested in lecturing at you, and I want to hear your thoughts and analysis. Even if you are not used to speaking up in class, you need to try to make comments that will add to our understanding of the material and/or that build significantly on others’ contributions in discussion. You will also need to engage actively in peer review activities and other class activities related to writing and analytic tasks. All in-class writing exercises will be geared toward developing your papers and are encouraged to save and use all in-class work for your future drafts.

-*Blackboard Posts* (10%) – You are required to write a *very short* Blackboard post (NO MORE THAN 100 WORDS) in response to each class reading/viewing. You must post these in the appropriate forum in the “Discussion” section of Blackboard by 12:00 PM the Tuesday or Thursday that we are scheduled to discuss the reading/viewing.

You should use the posts to begin articulating for class discussion and for writing assignments your impressions, questions, arguments, and any other thoughts on the course material. Though we will not always discuss them in class, I will sometimes ask you to expand upon or elaborate your Blackboard post for the benefit of your peers. You should also use the forums as an opportunity to read what your peers think of a particular reading/viewing! This may help you generate and/or complicate your ideas. There are no “wrong” responses, but I expect your *very short* posts to be well written and thoughtful.

If you are a social media user, then this component should not present any problems for you!

-*Writing Assignments* (75%) - There are six formal writing assignments for this class; three of these assignments will be revised. While the length and form of the assignments may vary, most of the essays will fall in the 1000-1250 word range. You will be graded on the overall quality of your writing in the context of the assignment, as well as on your careful attention to the mechanics of writing (spelling, punctuation, grammar, word usage, etc.). Additionally, revisions will be graded based on your thoroughgoing re-engagement with your work: You must pay careful attention to the instructor’s comments and references to writing issues in addition to developing your own individual revision process. Poorly revised essays will be graded accordingly. All assignments must be submitted by the deadline; there may be a grade penalty for late assignments.

**University Policies and Regulations**

-*TURNITIN and Academic Integrity -* It is critical that you submit only your own, original work for this class, and that you follow scrupulously appropriate academic standards for acknowledging the work of others in your writing and research. Information on proper documentation can be found in *The Little Seagull Handbook*. Please use either MLA or *Chicago* style documentation for this class.

The Code of Academic Integrity and Acknowledging the Work of Others is found in the Policy Notebook for the Cornell Community and also on the web at <http://www.theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/AcadInteg/code.html>.

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site. Students are also encouraged to use Turnitin.com themselves to help ensure that their writing meets these standards for integrity and acknowledging the work of others. For more information on Turnitin, see <http://www.it.cornell.edu/services/turnitin>.

Students also understand that by taking this course they agree to share their writing with others in the class for purposes of peer review and related exercises.

Students are prohibited from buying or selling course materials connected with this class. All course materials, including all reading/viewing/listening materials as well as lectures, assignments, syllabi, and related instructional materials, are protected by copyright. Without the express, written permission of the instructors, any buying or selling of course materials is unauthorized and constitutes classroom dishonesty.

*-Students with Disabilities -* If you have a disability-related need for reasonable academic adjustments in this course, please provide the instructor with an accommodation notification letter from Student Disability Services. Students are expected to give notice of the need for accommodations within the first three days of instruction. If you need immediate accommodations or physical access, please arrange to meet with the instructors within the first two class meetings.

**Course Calendar** (subject to change)

Thursday, Jan 22: Introductions

HOMEWORK: Read *Discipline and Punish* (pgs 3-16, 195-228) Don’t forget to post on Blackboard! Select one short passage (2-3 sentences) for an in-class writing exercise on Tuesday

Tuesday, Jan 27: Genealogy of Punishment

HOMEWORK: Read *Prisons of Poverty* (pgs 7-27). Begin writing paper #1.

Thurs, Jan 29: Sociology of Punishment

HOMEWORK: Read *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (pgs 9-59, Blackboard) Finish writing paper #1

**Fri, Jan 30: DUE final draft of Paper #1 by 12:00PM in my email inbox (nf234).**

Tues, Feb 3: Activism and Punishment

HOMEWORK: Begin writing paper #2. Begin reading *Newjack* (pgs 12-94). Choose a sentence or two from any of the readings we have done that you think could use some revision for an in-class exercise. Be prepared to explain why you think it needs revision

Thurs, Feb 5: Revision Workshop

HOMEWORK: Finish reading excerpt from *Newjack*. Finish draft of paper #2.

**Fri, Feb 6: DUE draft of Paper #2**

Tues, Feb 10: Prison Guards

HOMEWORK: Read excerpt from *Culture of Punishment* (pgs 50-84, Blackboard). Revise Paper #2. Schedule a conference with the instructor!

Thurs, Feb 12: Penal Spectatorship

HOMEWORK: Continue revising paper #2 Read excerpt from *New Jim Crow* (pgs 1-96)

**Fri, Feb 13: DUE final draft of Paper #2**

**FEB BREAK**

Thurs, Feb 19: New Jim Crow & Personal Narrative

HOMEWORK: Read“What is to be Done?” (Blackboard). Begin drafting paper #3

Tues, Feb 24: “What is to be Done?” and Part I wrap-up.

HOMEWORK: Finish a draft of paper #3 for peer review on Thursday.

Thurs, Feb 26: Peer Review

HOMEWORK: Reading from the prison anthology (Blackboard).

**Fri, Feb 27: DUE final draft of Paper #3**

Tues, March 3: Prison Writing

HOMEWORK: Read *In the Belly of the Beast* excerpt (Blackboard)

Thurs, March 5: Jack Henry Abbott

HOMEWORK: Read *Not About Nightingales* (Blackboard)*.* Draft Essay #4

Tues, March 10: *Not About Nightingales*

HOMEWORK: Read *Big-Butt Girls, Hard-Headed Women* and look at the Medea Project website (Blackboard).

Thurs, March 12: Rhodessa Jones and the Medea Project

HOMEWORK: Read “Restorytive Justice” (Blackboard).

**Fri, March 13: DUE final draft of Paper #4**

Tues, March 17: “Restorytive Justice”

HOMEWORK: Read *Short Eyes* (Blackboard).

Thurs, March 19: NO CLASS

Tues, March 24: *Short Eyes*

HOMEWORK: Read *An Indeterminate Life* and “Where the Walls Contain Everything but the Sky” (Blackboard).

Thurs, March 26: The Phoenix Players Theatre Group

HOMEWORK: Watch the film *Cool Hand Luke* (Blackboard)

**SPRING BREAK**

Tues, April 7: *Cool Hand Luke*

HOMEWORK: Watch the film *I Want to Live!* (Blackboard)

Thurs, Apr 9: *I Want to Live!*

HOMEWORK: Watch *Oz (*blackboard)

**Fri, Apr 10: DUE Draft of paper #5**

Tues, Apr 14: *Oz* episode 1

HOMEWORK: Watch *Orange is the New Black* episode 1 (blackboard) Schedule a conference with instructor

Thurs, Apr 16: *Orange is the New Black* ep 1

**Fri, Apr 17: DUE final of paper #5**

Tues, Apr 21: Student presentations

Thurs, Apr 23: Student presentations

Tues, Apr 28: Student presentations

Thurs, Apr 30: Student presentations

Tues, May 5: Student presentations. Concluding thoughts.

**Final paper DUE TBD**