

**CES 494**  
**Race, Gender, and the prison Industrial Complex**  
**Fall 2007**

<b>Instructor</b>	Dr. David Leonard	<b>E-mail</b>	<a href="mailto:djl@wsu.edu">djl@wsu.edu</a>
<b>Phone</b>	335-6854	<b>Office Hours</b>	MW, 10:30-12 AND BY APPOINTMENT
<b>Office</b>	Wilson 117		Fall 2007

Introduction and Course Description

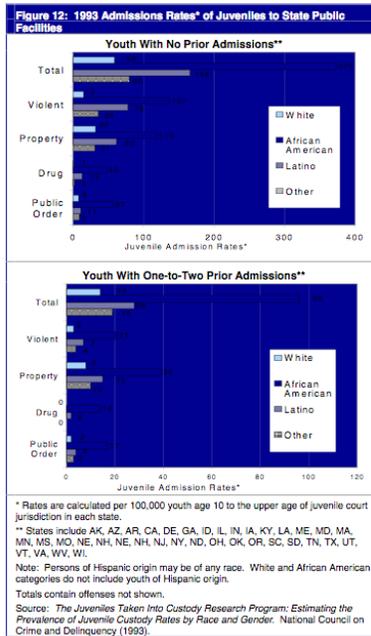
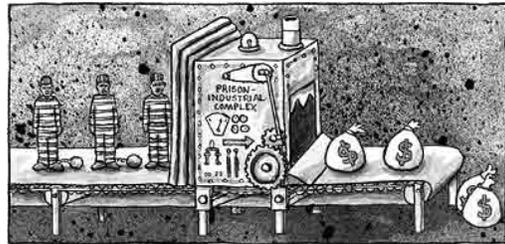
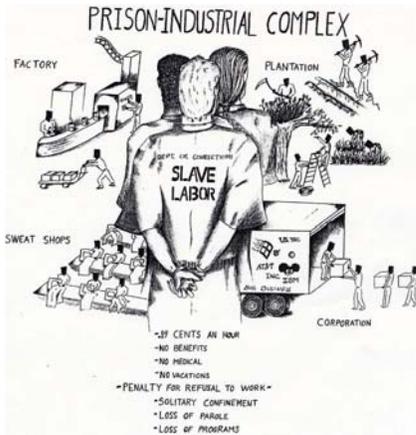
Ask yourself the following question: what is the function of prisons and the entire criminal justice system in America? What about in other parts of the world? How do your own privileges, whether it be race, gender, nationality, or class affect your vision about the necessary role and function of prisons and the entire criminal justice system? How do the inequities inside America's prisons and the declining significance of rehabilitation programs affect your understanding of America's prison system?

The task of this class is, thus, to examine the nature of the prison industrial complex, specifically focusing on the ways in which race, gender, and nation infect and affect the organization and maintenance of a carceral nation. We will reflect on it's the persistence of inequalities, the challenges to securing justice, and the connections between fear, capitalism, race, gender, and institutions (and instruments) of policing. If you want to learn about America's prisons, and how they increasingly function as a business; if you want to think about how prisons impact communities of color; if you want to learn about prison labor, voter disenfranchisement, the intersections of race and fear, and much, much more you are in the right spot.

We will learn about the origins, context, consequence and discursive/societal/social/racial/gender meaning of the following:

- “Almost two million people are behind prison and jail bars in the United States. 70% of those incarcerated/locked down/made to disappear are people of color.
- The fastest growing group of prisoners is black women. Per capita the most numerous group are Native Americans.
- In 1994, one in three black men between the ages of 20-29 were in prison, jail, on probation or on parole. In 1995, 47% of state and federal inmates were black, the largest group behind bars
- Black men were 7 times more likely than white men to be in prison. In 1993, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, and Alaskan natives made up 2% of prison population. Native Americans are 10 times more likely than whites to be imprisoned. Latinos are the fastest growing group behind bars.
- Between 1985 and 1995 Latinos jumped from 10% of all state and federal inmates to 18%. In 1993, whites made up 74% of the general population, but only 36% of federal and state prison inmates. In 1970, there were 5,600 women in federal and state prisons.

- By 1996 there were 75,000. 60% of that population are black and Latina. In 1993, the overall incarceration rate for juveniles was 221 per 1000,000; for Latino youth it was 481 per 100,000; and for black youth it was 810 per 100,000.”<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.prisons.org/racism.htm>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.etext.org/Politics/MIM/art/prisonindustry.jpg>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.impactpress.com/articles/febmar01/prison1.jpg>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.yale.edu/slam/barcodeinmate8k.jpg>

<sup>5</sup> [http://z.about.com/d/uspoltics/1/0/u/4/justice\\_chart.png](http://z.about.com/d/uspoltics/1/0/u/4/justice_chart.png)

### **Prerequisites**

It is important that everyone arrives in class with an open-mind, a critical gaze (a willingness to go beyond common assumptions) and most importantly a willingness and desire to read and write. Without writing and reading skills (as well as a desire to engage in those elements of learning) this class will be a struggle. For those students who want to improve these skills, this class will facilitate that process and assist you in tapping into the resources on campus. For those who want a class that does not require thinking, that does not mandate completion of the reading, that sees attendance as optional, that is in all ways easy on the mind, you may want to look elsewhere.

### **Required Readings**

- *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis* by Christian Parenti (Verso, 2000, ISBN-10: 1859843034)
- *Arbitrary Justice: The Power of the American Prosecutor* by Angela J. Davis; Oxford University Press, 2007, ISBN-10: 0195177363)
- *Are Prisons Obsolete?* by Angela Y. Davis (Open Media, 2003, ISBN-10: 1583225811)
- *Short Eyes: A Play* by Miguel Pinero and Marvin F. Camillo (Hill and Wang, 1975, ISBN-10: 0374521476)

**For the books below, you will be asked to select 1 of them to read, and then complete required assignment**

- *Yesterday Will Make You Cry* by Chester Himes (W. W. Norton & Company, 1999, ISBN-10: 039331829X)
- *The Prisoner's Wife: A Memoir*, by Asha Bandela (Scribner, 2000, ISBN-10: 0671021486)

### **Course Requirements**

#### **Attendance**

You are expected to attend class every day, arrive on time, and participate in an informed and consistent manner. (PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU ARRIVE LATE OR LEAVE CLASS EARLY, OR SIMPLY DECIDE TO TAKE A BREAK DURING CLASS, YOU MAY BE GIVEN A PARTIAL ABSENCE). Anything less will not be tolerated and will result in problems in this class. After two absences (excused and unexcused) each missed class will lead to a 3% deduction (per day) from your overall grade. This may seem punitive but (1) class discussions are the most important element of this class; (2) there are a number of extra credit opportunities. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of class,

so lateness will potentially lead to an absence for that day. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made while you were away.

### **Participation (7%)**

In order for this class to be productive you will need to come to class each and every day prepared to discuss the material. This requires more than simply doing the reading (WHICH IS ESSENTIAL), but arriving at class with a readiness to discuss the issues for that day. Recognizing that silence is not always a result of a lack of interest or preparation, I envision participation along many lines. Participating in class not only consists of talking, but also includes **listening** (please do not talk while others are speaking), interacting with your peers, and contributing to our classroom energy (body language, being engaged – no newspapers, no playing “rock, paper scissors,” or cell phones).

There are three additional ways to enhance your participation grade and contribution to class:

- 1 You can e-mail me comments or questions prior to class
- 2 You can hand me a note at the beginning of class that asks specific questions (or relays comments) about readings, a previous lecture or film – I will do my best to incorporate into that day’s class
- 3 You can also enhance participation grade by reading the daily newspapers in print or online and bringing the class’s attention to relevant articles/developments

### **Participation Portion of grades based on following:**

- 6-7 Points: Active participant in class in all regards; enhances and invigorates the class
- 5-4 Points: Participates and contributes regularly; does not push class conversations in new directions, but contributes on a regular basis
- 3 Points: Contributes on occasions but does so at basic level; engaged, but not active
- 2 Points: Rarely contributes, but present; shows limited effort and interest in class
- 1 Point: Does not contribute, but physically present for most part; brings little energy and generally demonstrates little interest or effort within class
- 0 Points: Detracts from overall success of class because of disinterest, disengagement, negative attitude, rudeness, non or disruptive/destructive participation, etc.

### **In-Class Work (5%)**

In this course, we will utilize the classroom space to engage in numerous exercises and activities. It is important that you take these seriously and put forth your best effort. In

order to convey the seriousness and importance of these activities (which will be both individual and group oriented), they will account for 5% of your grade. If you miss a class in which we do an exercise, or arrive late, you will receive a zero for that assignment. If it becomes clear that we are not completing the reading, **weekly reading quizzes** may be included within this component of the class.

### **Daily Class Preparation Papers (20%)**

Throughout the semester, you will be asked to turn in a daily class preparation papers, which should include (1) a short reaction to the reading, highlighting its argument, major themes and your thoughts/analysis about points raised (please note, you can also use this space to engage the reading creatively through poetry or spoken word); (2) a list of several key quotes from that reading; (3) a list of several questions taken from that reading. **It is estimated that each daily class preparation will be 1-2 pages and they must be typed.** They are due at the beginning of class (NO EXCEPTIONS) – (2 x 10)

### **Exams (25%)**

There will be two exams for this class. They will be take-home exams, potentially consisting of both short answer and essay-type questions. In totality, the exams will ask you to reflect on and analyze readings, class materials, and the overall meaning, form, and broader context related to the prison industrial complex. For example, a short-answer question might ask you to discuss the nature and incentives for corporations to use prison labor, whereas an essay question might ask you to reflect on the ways in which race and gender define/over-determine the organization of America's prison system.

### **Book Review (10%)**

During my absence you will be asked to write a paper that serves as a review essay for both your novel of choice and *Short Eyes*. Specifically, this essay (2-3 pages) provides you with the opportunity to reflect on how on these works document/define/analyze the PIC: how do the author's represent (imagine) America's prisons; how do each discusses/represents the links between criminalization, prisons, and justice to variables of race (and racism), gender, and nation; how inequality, privileges and other disparities are linked to prison culture and practice.

### **Film Review (10%)**

During my absence you will be asked to write a paper that serves as a review essay for both your film of choice and *Slam*. As with book review, this should be an analytical and argumentative paper that reflects on these views conception and representation of the criminal justice system. Focus on how each conceives of the PIC and how it sees current trends in prisons to be related to race, gender, and nation. Equally important, you may want to focus on how each film explores issues outside of the criminal justice system to explore or explain the demographics, nature, or meaning of prisons. More details to follow!

### **Project + 3-4 page paper (25%)**

This assignment represents the backbone of the class and is imagined as a semester long endeavor. While I will provide more details, the emphasis of this project resides with

your ability to apply the theories, issues, readings and course materials at a local, global or comparative level in terms of the prison industrial complex. Along with the project you will be asked to complete a 3-4 page paper that reflects on and offers analysis to your project. Lastly, you will also be asked to present your work during our last two class meetings

Potential examples/approaches to project which could reflect either primary or secondary research:

- Power Point (think 20-40 slides)
- Website/My Space (extensive)
- Collage (multiple)
- Field Research
- Documentary – Using other footage or own
- Art (own piece) – Multiple pieces
- Spoken Word (6-8 pieces)

### **Extra Credit (UP TO 10%)**

While there will likely be events that will come during the semester, which will provide extra credit opportunities, there are three clear possibilities for extra credit: (1) You may select a book focused on the prison industrial complex/race, gender and the criminal justice system – not from required course readings – (please see me if you want suggestions) and write a 3-4 page book review, offering analysis, critical engagement, etc. This is worth up to 10%. (2) You may write an extra film analysis paper that reflects on representations of race and prisons or complete an extra pamphlet. This film should be one not screened in class. This is worth up to 5%. Please note with this extra credit as with Book Review extra credit assignment, your paper should not a thumbs up/down paper, but rather a critical, in-depth, smart, analytical, and argumentative paper; (3) A point of emphasis for this class is our engagement with the outside world and education as transformation, requiring the class to move beyond the classroom walls. In order to take our education to the streets, we are asking you to create one pamphlet, fact sheet or poster on the prison industrial complex (as it relates to race, gender, or nation), providing folks outside of class with inspiring and transforming information, statistics, narrative, image, etc. I would suggest a pamphlet on WSU and the prison industrial complex; racial inequality and America’s prisons; Global Torture; Prisons as Modern-Day Slavery; Imprisonment and the War on Immigrants (5%). (4) Other possibilities to follow

### **Assignment Schedule**

<b>Due Date**</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Grade Value</b>
<b>September 17, 2007</b>	<b>EXAM #1</b>	<b>10 points</b>
<b>October 19, 2007</b>	<b>EXAM #2</b>	<b>15 points</b>
<b>October 26, 2007</b>	<b>Film Essay</b>	<b>10 Points</b>
<b>November 14, 2007</b>	<b>Book Review Essay</b>	<b>10 Points</b>
<b>December 12, 2007</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>30 points</b>
<b>10 x ALL TERM</b>	<b>DAILY PREP PAPERS</b>	<b>20 points (10 X 2 pts)</b>

<b>Everyday</b>	<b>Participation</b>	<b>5 points</b>
<b>December 7, 2007</b>	<b>Extra Credit/Late Work</b>	<b>Up to 10 points for extra credit</b>

\*\*We hold right to change due dates in your favor according to your needs and desires – Communicate

**Grading Scale**

100-93: A

92-90: A-

89-87: B+

86-83: B

82-80: B-

79-77: C+

76-73: C

72-70: C-

69-67: D+

66-63: D

62-60: D-

59 and Below: F

## Tentative Course Schedule

### August 20 -- Introduction

### August 22

Reading: Parenti, xi-28  
Prep Paper counts as a double

### August 27

Reading: Parenti, 29-68

### August 29

Reading: Parenti, 69-110

### September 5

Reading: Parenti, 111-162

### September 10

Reading: Parenti, 163-210

### September 12

Reading: Parenti, 211-244

### September 17

Reading: A.J. Davis, 3-19

### Exam #1 (9/17/07)

### September 19

Reading: A.J. Davis, 20-60

### September 24

Reading: A.J. Davis, 61-92

### September 26

Reading: A.J. Davis, 123-142

### October 1

Reading: A.J. Davis, 143-178

### October 3

Reading: A.J. Davis, 179-194

### October 8 & 10

Film: *Slam*

Note: You may do a prep paper for these two days looking at least three website/online articles dealing with the prison industrial complex

### October 15 –

Film: *Short Eyes*

### EXAM #2 IN MY BOX OCTOBER 16

**October 17-November 14: NO CLASS (INDEPENDENT WORK/PROJECT)**

Reading: *Short Eyes: A Play* by Miguel Pinero and Marvin F. Camillo and EITHER *Yesterday Will Make You Cry* by Chester Himes OR *The Prisoner's Wife: A Memoir*, by Asha Bandela

ASSIGNMENTS DUE DURING THIS PERIOD: FILM ESSAY (OCTOBER 26, 2007), BOOK REVIEW ESSAY DUE NOVEMBER 10<sup>TH</sup>

MOST IMPORTANTLY, YOU SHOULD USE THIS TO WORK ON PROJECTS – THEY MUST BE AMAZING, INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGING, ENGAGING, ETC.

### November 26

Reading: A.Y. Davis, 1-39

### November 28

Reading: A.Y. Davis, 40-83; 105-115

### December 3 – PRESENTATIONS

### December 5 --PRESENTATIONS

This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances and shifts in class needs. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check on announcements made in your absence.

### Course Policies

As I hope to redefine the classroom as a space of discussion, debate and intellectual transformation, I hope to unsettle your ideas of a student-teacher relationship. Specifically, I embrace democracy in the classroom and critical pedagogy. In terms of a democratic classroom, I attempt, with your assistance and desire, to create a space that is yours to define and shape. I will facilitate and guide, but not demand and order. This change may be potentially disconcerting, given the nature of classroom organization and pedagogy, compared to others at this university. I encourage you to take ownership in (of) the classroom and in your learning, and to demand agency (control) within your learning experience. This requires communication, effort and **not taking advantage of the freedom available in this space (or worrying about other's inability to utilize this opportunity)**. Although I hope someday I will not have to institute class rules, experiences have shown it to be necessary. We can certainly expand on these, but the following represents rules/guidelines for our class, ones that are in part based on experiences in previous classes:

- 1 READ, READ, READ . . . .
- 2 **Turn cell phones off upon arrival to class – Please note that if I see your cell phone/other handheld device (not if it rings) whether because you've decided to text message, check scores, show friend a picture or listen to messages, you will be asked to place that phone in a box before every class for the rest of the semester. YOU WILL ALSO BE MARKED AS ABSENT FOR THAT DAY'S CLASS**
- 3 If you decide that you cannot make it through class without getting up to get something to eat or drink, you are asked to bring back food or drink for everyone. Class is not a movie theater so **YOU ARE ASKED NOT TO GET UP DURING CLASS BECAUSE YOU FEEL THIRTY OR HUNGRY**
- 4 Arrive to class on time (and that doesn't mean put down your stuff before class begins and then leave for 25 minutes)– **THAT MEANS AT WHAT TIME? \_\_\_\_\_**
- 5 Sleeping or otherwise “tuning out” is not acceptable; class requires engagement and participation from all members of the community. You should not come to class with the sole intent of sucking up the classroom oxygen while you sleep
- 6 **IF I SEE YOU SLEEPING DURING A FILM, YOU WILL RECEIVE ONE WARNING (I.E. I/WE WILL BE YOUR ALARM CLOCK ONCE); IF YOU ARE SEEN TO BE SLEEPING AGAIN, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO REENACT THE SCENES THAT YOU SLEPT THROUGH AFTER THAT NEXT DAY'S CLASS MEETING**
- 7 **IF I SEE OR ANY OF YOUR COLLEAGUES SEE YOU READING THE NEWSPAPER OR ANY OTHER NON-CLASS RELATED DOCUMENT, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO PUT IT AWAY. UPON A “SECOND OFFENSE” YOU WILL BE ASKED TO COMPLETE AN ESSAY, USING**

5 SOURCES FROM ETHNIC NEWS WATCH, WHICH WILL BE WRITTEN ON THE NEWSPAPER (OR OTHER DOCUMENT) YOU WERE READING IN CLASS. YOUR PAPER MUST BE LEGIBLE – THIS PAPER IS DUE THAT FOLLOWING CLASS MEETING AND IF IT IS NOT TURN IN OR DO SO AT A SATISFACTORY LEVEL, YOU WILL RECEIVE AN ABSENCE FOR THAT PREVIOUS DAY

- 8 Be respectful of others, in terms of engaging and listening to other's analysis, commentaries, points of discussion
- 9 Reflect on social location
- 10 Respect and understand rage
- 11 Don't be rude (egs – Offer a comment and then while someone is responding walk out of the room to get something to eat; walking out of the room to get something to eat CONSTANTLY; doing other work or engaging in rock-paper-scissors while in class; disrespect the privacy of the class by gossiping about issues or discussions of class)

### **Cheating**

DON'T CHEAT! IT IS PATHETIC, UNACCEPTABLE, AND DISRESPECTFUL TO YOURSELF, YOUR COLLEAGUES, THE MATERIALS, HISTORY, MYSELF, AND THE PURPOSE OF EDUCATION. DON'T DO IT! What constitutes cheating: Turning in any work that is not yours, whether that means copying and pasting from a website, using someone else papers, copying a friend's work, etc. If someone else said it, wrote it, thought it, etc. give them credit – DON'T STEAL INTELLECTUAL WORK OF OTHERS. The assignments you turn in should be your work, with your analysis, your prose, and your voice, spirit, soul, and effort. Your failure to follow these basic instructions, to respect the classroom, each other, history; in choosing to cheat, to take the easy route, to be in the business of pretending to learn, think, analyze, and otherwise be a student, is not acceptable in any regard. If you are unfamiliar with WSU policy regarding cheating and confused as to what constitutes cheating (plagiarism), please consult with WSU Student handbook.

### **Students with Disabilities**

I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with a documented disability. Please go to the Disability Resource Center (DRC) during the first two weeks of every semester to seek information or to qualify for accommodations. All accommodations MUST be approved through the DRC, located in the Administration Annex Bldg, Room 205. To make an appointment with a disability counselor, please call 335-3417.

### **Critical Pedagogy**

Unlike many classes at the university level, which embrace the classroom in traditional terms (professor lectures, you listen, write down as much as possible and then spit all back during exams), as a place where professors teach to unknowing students, this class works from a critical pedagogical approach. We will follow in this tradition, hoping to use the classroom space to not

only learn, but as a place to transgress our reality. Challenging our accepted notions of school and society, this class works from the idea that the classroom is a democratic site of social transformation, requiring critical reflection, dedication and limited signs of authority (while I remain in “power” in terms of grades, we must challenge the student/teacher dichotomy). A critical pedagogical approach, however, requires preparation and effort – to make it work you cannot passively use the class and wait for others to inform you. Take initiative. The following definition, from Henry Giroux, establishes some additional points of departure

“The critical question here is whose future, story, and interests do the school represent. . . Critical pedagogy argues that school practices need to be informed by a public philosophy that addresses how to construct ideological and institutional conditions in which the lived experience of empowerment for the vast majority of student becomes the defining feature of schooling. Critical pedagogy attempts to:

1. “Create new forms of knowledge through its emphasis on breaking down disciplines and creating interdisciplinary knowledge.
2. Raise questions about the relationships between the margins and centers of power in schools and is concerned about how to provide a way of reading history as part of a larger project of reclaiming power and identity, particularly as these are shaped around the categories of race, gender, class, and ethnicity.
3. Reject the distinction between high and popular culture so as to make curriculum knowledge responsive to the everyday knowledge that constitutes peoples' lived histories differently.
4. Illuminate the primacy of the ethical in defining the language that teachers and others use to produce particular cultural practices.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Guiding Principles<sup>7</sup>**

The classroom is a unique environment where we can come together to promote learning and growth in each other; it is a space that has the potential to be transgressive along a number of lines. In order to make the best use of the classroom space, while fulfilling the ideological objects of critical pedagogy, it is important that we have some guidelines to frame our conversations. These are not rules or demands (as opposed to the above), but guidelines/suggestions that should ground each and every discussion, as well as your own reading, fostering a respectful and safe learning environment, that challenges all of us to reflect on our own analysis, positionality, privileges and racial/gender/class/nation/sexual ethos.

1. Acknowledge that racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and other institutionalized forms of oppression exist.
2. Acknowledge that one mechanism of institutionalized racism, classism, sexist, heterosexism, etc. is that we are **all systematically taught misinformation** about our

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.perfectfit.org/CT/giroux2.html>

<sup>7</sup> Adopted from guidelines used by Dr. Lynn Weber and Dr. Patti Verstrat

own group and about members of other groups. This is true for members of privileged and oppressed groups.

3. **Read in an engaged way**, recognizing the ideology and politics imbedded in every text. Make notes in the margins – **“dialogue” with the text**, using exclamation points, questions or issue complete statements, questions or critiques. Ask yourself: what is significant in this piece, what elicits anger/sadness/laughter, but go beyond emotional responses to be prepared to make specific statements about the reading!
4. **Be aware of your own subject position, ideologies, privileges and prejudices.** Recognize your own relationship to institutions of power and structures of domination. This can help you make specific connections to the reading, class discussions and other forms of feedback. Rather than proclaiming, “This article sucks,” or “You are wrong,” you can get more specific about the basis and origins of your reaction. For example, rather than engaging in a discussion about homosexuality with statements of disgust and contempt, it might be better to state: “From my position as a white male, who was raised with the teachings of the Bible, I find homosexuality a bit troubling, especially in the context of the arguments made by \_\_\_\_\_ on page \_\_\_\_.”
5. Agree to **combat actively the myths and stereotypes** about your own “group” and other groups so that we can break down the walls that prohibit group cooperation and group gain. Read and listen with recognition of other people’s subject position and ideologies.  
**LISTEN TO OTHERS!**
6. Reflect on our **choice of language in and outside of class**, striving to rid our vocabulary of racist, sexist, homophobic words, phrases. Recognize that your choice of words reflect your own ideological position and may bother others (think about how others may react to your words – not just content, but the way we chose to express those thoughts)
7. **Create a safe atmosphere for open discussion.** If members of the class may wish to make comments that they do not want repeated outside the classroom, they can preface their remarks with a request that the class agree not to repeat the remarks. Also, think about your language (including body language), posture, etc. contributes to safe/empowering or disempowering/unsafe learning environment.
8. **Take Risks:** I want this class to be a space where everyone should feel comfortable enough to disagree with each other. This needs to be safe space so reflect on the ways you engage others with your own pronouncements and how you react (with words, body language) to their statements – react privilege and positionality
9. **Read and dialogue in a politically engaged way.** Politics, for our purposes here, reflects **power**, and relationship to systems/sources of power. Power dynamics are contextual (situational) and relational. You may have power in some spaces and lack it in others, all depending on social location. Ask yourself these questions while reading and discussing within the classroom space: Is the analysis leaving anyone relevant out? For what reasons? Where is this analysis coming from? Whose knowledge base is being explored or forwarded?
10. **Speak with evidence** and “facts” on your side. Despite the popular pronouncements that there are no wrong answers, there are incomplete, problematic, superficial, surfaced, and unsubstantiated answers. Reflect on your own answers and the basis of your conclusions
11. **Go beyond an either/or dichotomy.** Movies are neither entertainment nor ideological constructs, but both. **Incorporate a both/and approach** rather than an “either/or.”
12. **Recognize the knowledge base of your peers.** Its ok – recommended and great, in fact

– to respond to a counterpoint with “hey, I’ve never thought of it that way,” or “well, you do make a good point – I’ll have to think about that for a while.” Discussion in this class isn’t about proving, embarrassing, showing off, winning, losing, convincing, holding one’s argument to the bitter end – its about dialogue, debate and self-reflections.

This list merely represents a starting point of guidelines, which we may need to add to throughout the semester. The included guidelines can be amended and changed with the consent of the class, as well.

### Primary Learning Outcomes

- Ability to define and explain “key” individuals, events, movements and concepts that make-up the history of prisons during the later portions of the twentieth century
- Ability to understand key terms: prison industrial complex, panopticon, crime & punishment, police brutality, exploitation, accountability, DWB, criminal, law-breaker, social justice, borders, fences as they relate to prisons and America “justice”
- To develop skills necessary to engage the criminal justice system at a critical level
- Willingness to critically engage the historical context that continues to give rise to the unequal enforcement of justice through prisons, racial profiling and military occupation of particular communities
- Understanding of the historic and theoretical differences between a criminal and a law-breaker
- Comprehend the contemporary role of prisons as industry, as an agent of social control
- Understand the ways in which race, gender and class affect the application of (in)justice
- Ability to compare and contrast the dominant narrative constructions of the criminal justice system and those derived from a counter hegemonic position
- Recognizing the function of prisons, police and the overall criminal justice system in its relationship to capitalism, globalization and political formations
- Understanding the power of media, image, cultural frames and representation within the maintenance of the criminal justice system
- Ability to provide context for the emergence of the prison industrial complex and its relationship to state violence (what are the connections between media, rise in prisons and police brutality?)
- Ability to answer the following question: are prisons obsolete?
- Develop an understanding of the possibility to disrupting business as usual within the criminal justice system through dreaming, education, organizing and action

### Key Terms<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> The following terms are taken from the works of Patricia Hill Collins, Michael Omi, Cornel West, Howard Winant, Peggy McIntosh, Robert Blauner

**Binary Thinking:** A system of thought that divides concepts into two oppositional categories, whereupon meaning for one is derived from meaning of the other; for example, white/black, man/woman, West/East, civilized/uncivilized, saint/sinner, reason/emotion, and normal/deviant

**Capitalism:** an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production. Capitalism is typically characterized by extreme distributions of wealth and large divisions between the rich and the poor.

**Colorblindness:** a racial ideology that gained prominence during the post-civil rights era that argues that using racial language perpetuates racism

**Commodification:** in capitalist political economies, land, products, services, and ideas are assigned economic values and are bought and sold in marketplaces as commodities

**Controlling Images:** The terms representations and stereotypes describe this socio-cultural phenomenon: representations need not be stereotypical and stereotypes need not function as controlling images, yet as hegemony works to form consent dominant representations govern and direct common sense ideas and dominant discourses. Controlling images are closely tied to power relations of race, class, gender, sexuality, and nationality.

**Discourse:** A set of ideas and practices that, when taken together, organize both a way society defines certain truths about itself and the way it puts together social power

**Globalization:** The increasing concentration of capital in the hands of relatively small number of transnational corporations. Two effects of globalization are greater influence on the world economy than that of nation states, and a global distribution of wealth and poverty that privileges Western European, North American, and other advanced industrial nations

**Hegemony:** A form of social organization that uses ideology to create taken-for-granted ideas that are used to justify oppression. Hegemonic conditions absorb and depoliticize oppressed groups' dissent and encourage individuals and groups to police one another and suppress each other's dissent.

**Ideology:** a body of ideas reflecting the interests of a particular social group. Racism, sexism, xenophobia, and heterosexism all have ideologies that support social inequality. Ideologies are never static and always have internal contradictions.

**Intersectionality:** analysis claiming that systems of race, economic class, gender, sexuality, nation, ethnicity, and age from mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape African American experiences and, in turn, are shaped by African Americans.

**Oppression:** An unjust situation in which, systematically and over a long period of time, one group denies another group access to the resources of society. Race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity constitute major forms of oppression.

**Paradigm:** an interpretive framework used to explain social phenomena.

Political economy: the way of organizing power relations and the economic system. Capitalism has a distinctive political economy characterized by larger differences in wealth between social classes and major difference in power where wealthy people have more power than poor people.

Racism: a fundamental characteristic of social projects which create or reproduce structures of domination based on essentialist categories based on essentialist categories); a system of unequal power and privilege in which humans are divided into groups or 'race' with social rewards unevenly distributed to groups based on their racial classification. In the United States, racial segregation constitutes a fundamental principle of how racism is organized.

Racial Formation: a Sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed. A process of historically situated projects in which human bodies and social structures are represented and organized

Racial Project: a racial project is simultaneously an interpretation, representation, or explanation of racial dynamics, and an effort to reorganize and redistribute resources along particular lines

Social Oppression: dynamic process by which one segment of society achieves power and privilege through the control and exploitation of other groups, which are literally oppressed, that is, burdened and pushed down into the lower levels of the social order

White Privilege: an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visa, clothes, tools and blank checks.

White Supremacy: the attitudes, ideologies, and policies associated with the rise of blatant forms of white European dominance over 'nonwhite' populations ... making invidious distinctions of a socially crucial kind that are based primarily if not exclusively characteristic and ancestry. White supremacy refers to "color bars," racial segregation, and restriction of meaningful citizenship.

### **A comment about me, my views on class, and discussions of film**

Rather than simply delineate the seriousness I have for the classroom in general, and for discussions about race and social formation; rather than use this space to challenge you to think about your own social location (identity) and how that affects your expectations and desires for the class; rather than use this moment to complicate the commonplace desire for Ethnic Studies to serve as a tourist destination of the "exotic," and the "unknown" (and therefore not suppose to be difficult and challenging); rather than my reminding you that this will be a challenging class, which requires your seriousness on all fronts; rather than highlighting the problematics of "saying its just a movie," or "sure that sucks, but we are making progress," I thought I would conclude this syllabus with three spoken word pieces. I hope we have some time to talk about them!

## War on Black America

Over **1 million black people** are currently in jail in America

That's 1 out of 35

Now split that in half, and we get 1 out of 17 black men locked up

Now remove the very old and very young, the number drops to 1 in 10 black men

Now if you include those on parole or probation the number is 1 in 4

If you limit it those in their 20s its **1 in 3**

**That is black men have a 30% higher chance of doing time** at some point in their lives

For black women things are not much better

Conservatives blame the culture, liberals blame the lack of opportunity yet abolitions blame the system.

**A system where a black youth is six times more likely to be locked up than a white peer, even when charged with a similar crime and when neither has a prior record**

A system where 95% of sexual crimes are committed by white men, yet only account for 25% of those in jail for those crimes

A system where over seventy percent of those locked up are there for nonviolent drug offenses or property crimes

A system where seventy-five percent of crack users are white, yet 75% of those incarcerated for crack use are black

A system where 500 grams of coke receives the same sentence as 5 grams of crack

A system where African Americans constitute 13% of all monthly drug users, yet represent 35% of arrests for drug possession, 55% of convictions and 74% of prison sentences

A system where black and Latino defendants pay twice as much for bail

A system where **4 million Americans** have lost right to vote

A system where prisoners are more likely to catch AIDS than receive an education

A system where prisoners are more likely to become mentally ill than help

A system where prisoners are more likely to work for Victoria Secret or MCI than receive job training

A system that forces prisoners to work in companies that won't hire before or after incarceration

A system where stockholders count their cash as so many people of color are sent to prison

A system where black and brown people, who are the first fired and never hired, labor for TWA, MCI and Victoria Secret, where Boeing, IBM, American Express, Compaq, Microsoft, Honeywell Motorola, Revlon, Pierre Cardin, G.E., NIKE, Starbucks, JanSport, US West and WSU all profit off the suffering, pain, and subjugation of others

A system where they sweat or slave for 23 a day so that they can call their parents at 4 dollars a minute or put 10 dollar snickers bar

A system where between 1971 and 1992, the government increased spending on prisons from 2.3 billion dollars to 31.2 billion

A system where in 1995 alone, money allocated for university construction dropped by \$954 million, while allocations for prison construction jumped by \$926 million dollars

A system where the richest 1% controls over half this nation's wealth -- where the richest 10% controls nearly 85% of its wealth

A system where the poorest 20%, some 60 million people, share less than one half of 1% of the wealth

A system where **40 million people live in poverty, where 10 million are homeless**

**A system where prisons do not disappear problems, instead they disappear human beings.**

### Keepin It Real

You say I can't teach African American Studies

That I don't have the credentials or authority to teach ethnic studies

"But I have a Ph.D. and experience," I respond. "Aren't those credentials?"

You say I don't have the personal experience and daily expertise

I'm not authentic, I can't keep it real

Like going to Chinese restaurant owned by white folks

Like eating a burrito from Taco Bell, Taco Time, or the frozen food section at Dissmores

Like going to the Paris or the Luxor as if it were a trip overseas

Nothing to learn from someone who learned from a book

Whether it be hip-hop, history, or hymns

Not authentic

Not keepin it real

Not a native informant

Not a token

Not a marketable face

Not a commodity

Not a tour guide

"Is this a job interview for Disneyland or at a university?" I ask respectfully

A world class university he tells

I wonder if her concerns stem from the absence of professors of color; I wonder if he wants biology or history to hire professors of color; if she, like me, sees my privilege . . . I wish

“Thanks for your ti . . . “

And before I could finish my goodbyes, she, a white female administrator, is back on the phone in search of the one needed and authentic black voice

And before I could reach the door, she, a young white student, was already busy ordering that new Snoop or 50 album as that’s some real shit

And before I could exit the room, he, a white fraternity guy from Othello, was already on the web, searching for an authentic headdress for his next party

And before I could ask if he has read E Patrick Johnson, Kelley, or bell hooks as it relates to authenticity

He, a white male, was on the phone ordering some real Mexican food (I want to ask if he has sought proof passport) and a Kimono straight from Japan for his mail order bride from Thailand

“Thanks for your time”

“No problem, homie, fa shnezle; peace, outey 5,000 . . . . Now that’s keep it real

{Dedicated to all those white administrators and white students who seek authentic voices in the classroom, yet ignore those voices everywhere else; dedicated to those who think Straight out Compton is more real than Straight out of Pullman

### **Learning inside the Box**

Learning how to rationalize poverty and inequality  
To explain away the billions who live on less than 2 dollars a day  
While we spend tens of hundreds on coffee, beer and tans

Learning how to place commodities ahead of people  
To justify the sweatshop workers who sew our shoes and Cougar gear  
Whose pain and suffering are of little consequence to us

Learning how to erase people  
To attend Super Bowl parties and complain about bad calls while half a city lives in poverty  
Still claiming ethics and morals without even hesitation

Learning how to celebrate tourism as philanthropy

To rationalize extravagant trips to 'exotic resorts' as your way of giving back  
So what about AIDS, tsunamis, earthquakes, absent infrastructure; pass me a guava, kiwi mango  
rum sunrise special

Learning how offer counter arguments and butts to American racism  
To justify black and brown prison populations  
Even though dorms are the true drug house

Learning how to profile, demonize and condemn  
Learning how to rationalize, minimize and deny  
Get out immigrants  
Affirmative Action ruined my life  
Stop the Terrorist  
Can't we all just get along?  
I didn't own slaves  
It's just a joke

Learning citizenship  
As slogans,  
USA . . . USA  
flag waving  
USA . . . USA  
and 2 dollars to the Red Cross  
USA

Thinking compassion for the victims of Jericho road is enough  
Forgetting that we must transform Jericho road, from Soweto to New Orleans

Learning how to manage difference  
Not challenge violence or inequality

Learning how to rationalize privilege  
Not challenge immorality and injustice

Learning how to sell the talking points as if they are original  
Not think

Learning how to be culturally competent  
Not Democratic Global Citizens

Learning how to be corporate competent

Learning Inside the Box  
American Education