

UMBC UGC New Course Request: AMST413: Policing and Prisons in U.S. Society

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Proposed Effective Date: Fall 2020

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COURSE INFORMATION:

Course Number(s)	AMST413
Formal Title	Policing and Prisons in U.S. Society
Transcript Title (≤30c)	Policing and Prisons
Recommended Course Preparation	Six credits in American Studies courses, 3 at the upper-level.
Prerequisite NOTE: Unless otherwise indicated, a prerequisite is assumed to be passed with a "D" or better.	None
# of Credits Must adhere to the UMBC Credit Hour Policy	3.00
Repeatable for additional credit?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Max. Total Credits	3.00 <small>This should be equal to the number of credits for courses that cannot be repeated for credit. For courses that may be repeated for credit, enter the maximum total number of credits a student can receive from this course. E.g., enter 6 credits for a 3 credit course that may be taken a second time for credit, but not for a third time. Please note that this does NOT refer to how many times a class may be retaken for a higher grade.</small>
Grading Method(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reg (A-F) <input type="checkbox"/> Audit <input type="checkbox"/> Pass-Fail

PROPOSED CATALOG DESCRIPTION (Approximately 75 words in length. Please use full sentences.):

This course examines the historical, political, economic, and social bases of policing and prisons in American society. Specifically, the course engages the nature of the "carceral" through an interdisciplinary exploration of how prisons function as institutions of moral training, the ways prisons and policing disparately and uniquely impact groups along varying lines of race, gender, and class identity, and how incarcerated people and other groups have advocated for both prison reform and abolition.

RATIONALE FOR NEW COURSE

According to Simon Balto, "In the last four decades, the United States has become the global leader in incarcerating its own citizens, with more than 6.8 million people under correctional supervision of some kind, 2.2 million of them in prisons and jails" (Balto 2019:3). Given these circumstances, this course provides space for students to develop a complex understanding of one of our most pressing contemporary social issues through an interdisciplinary engagement with histories of policing and prisons over the course of the twentieth century, as well as cultural production produced about and by incarcerated people. This course will be offered every year and will fit within our department's curricular concentration area, "U.S. Social Structures: American Regions, Institutions, and Communities." A significant amount of recent American Studies scholarship has been focused on questions of policing, prisons, surveillance, and the "carceral state." The attached syllabus contains many of these recent works and will allow majors and non-majors to grapple with one of the central tensions animating our field's most urgent current discussions. This course will primarily serve upper-level undergraduates in American Studies, but, given its interdisciplinary framework, will likely attract students from Africana Studies, History, and Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. This course is offered at the 400 level because the subject matter, in some cases, requires an in-depth foray into complex theoretical literatures and almost always requires significant reading assignments for which upperclassmen are uniquely equipped. Additionally, the course will be taught once a week in a long discussion section that will allow students to contend with, discuss, and debate complex and multi-layered concepts. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the syllabus, the recommended course preparation will position students to succeed by having them enter the course with a foundational understanding of interdisciplinary approaches and methodologies, as well as American Studies theories and investments. This course is designed with assignments, grading metrics, and assessments conducive to a regular A-F grading scale. Though the course will likely change with the publication of new works on prisons and policing in U.S. society, it will not change substantially enough to justify receiving credit for taking it twice.

ATTACH COURSE SYLLABUS (mandatory):

AMST413: Prisons and Policing in U.S. Society

Tu 4:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Instructor Information

Dr. Michael Casiano

mc12@umbc.edu

Fine Arts 546

Course Description

This course engages how practices and strategies of policing, punishment, and discipline manifest historically and in modern social structures. The course is structured historically in four thematic areas. In the first area, students are introduced to texts that situate the prison within a broader humanistic genealogy. In the second area, students engage the origins of American policing, the establishment of Black Codes & convict leasing in the U.S. South, and early twentieth-century penal orthodoxies in American cities. In the third area, students engage the advent of modern mass incarceration, the political economy of prison construction, and the oblique methods by which formerly-incarcerated people experience everyday forms of policing. After having engaged the roots and sources of the prison-industrial complex, the final area of the course will engage resistive cultural production from formerly- or currently-incarcerated people and the notion of prison abolition.

Learning Goals

After completing this course, students should be able to:

- Acquire a comprehensive understanding of the role of police and prisons in U.S. society, particularly regarding the way these institutions disproportionately and distinctly impact groups of varying and intersecting race, gender, and class identities;
- Critically discuss the role of punishment in contemporary society and imagine alternative modes of remediating conflict;
- Recognize the connection between the prison system and everyday lived experience through considering the ways that commonplace disciplinary techniques are foundational to other modern institutions besides the prison;
- Improve critical reading, writing, and facilitation skills.

Required Materials

All materials will be made available on Blackboard.

Grading & Assignments

Participation:	20%
Reading Responses:	20%
Midterm Exam:	20%
Final Paper:	40%

Grade Breakdown	
Letter Grade & Point Value	Description
A (500-450 points)	“Denotes excellent mastery of the subject and outstanding scholarship.”
B (449 – 400 points)	“Denotes good mastery of the subject and good scholarship.”
C (399 – 350 points)	“Denotes acceptable mastery of the subject and the usual achievement expected.”
D (349 – 300)	“Denotes borderline understanding of the subject. These grades denote marginal performance, and they do not represent satisfactory progress toward a degree.”
F (0-299points)	“Denotes failure to understand the subject and unsatisfactory performance.”

Participation – 100 Points

Students are graded for their active participation in class. This means asking and answering questions, bringing up evidence from readings and elsewhere, and pushing discussion in new directions. Not showing up to class will automatically earn a student 0 points, but showing up and sleeping, texting, or disrupting classroom discussion also constitutes an automatic 0. Students receive full credit if they show up on time, contribute to class discussion, and pay attention to their peers and instructor. Additionally, each student will be assigned a day in which they catalyze conversation by developing a series of discussion questions to guide the flow of classroom discussion.

Reading Responses – 100 Points

Each student will be responsible for five 500-word (two-page double-spaced maximum) reading responses throughout the course of the semester. Each response is worth **twenty points**. These responses should be critical syntheses that engage all the readings and course material for that week. They must be posted on Blackboard by 11:59 p.m. the Friday designated on the syllabus. These responses are meant to encourage students to develop critical and genuine insight into the course material. They will be judged based on their depth of evidence, their clarity of writing, and their pertinence to the writing prompt which the instructor will provide.

Midterm Exam – 100 Points

Students will be required to take an in-class midterm exam that is designed to help them concretize and synthesize foundational concepts in the study, analysis, and history of prisons and policing in the U.S. and transition us into the second-half of the course. The exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, short answers, and one longer essay. The exam will take place during class time on **October 20**.

Final Paper – 200 Points

Each student will be responsible for producing an original twelve- to fifteen-page research paper that examines some facet of prisons and policing in U.S. society, historically or contemporarily. Students will choose a cultural artifact (i.e. film, novel, television show, etc.) and develop a historically-contextualized argument using ten-to-twelve secondary sources. This paper is meant to provoke critical engagement with course themes and methods. Students will be required to turn in two segments of their paper throughout the semester. The following snapshots what students are expected to submit.

1. **Research Proposal (50 Points)** – Students will be required to submit a 750-word (no more than three double-spaced pages) proposal to the instructor outlining what they have chosen to write about. They will need to describe their topic in some detail and explain why they have chosen to analyze it. They must develop a preliminary argument tied to pertinent course themes. Students must also cite five-to-six secondary sources. This proposal is non-binding and students may change their subjects; however, if they choose to change their subjects, they should consider consulting the professor first.
2. **Final Paper (150 Points)** – Students must submit their final papers by **December 16 at 11:59 p.m.**

Assignment Schedule	
Date	Assignment
9/18	Reading Response #1
10/9	Reading Response #2
10/20	Midterm Exam
10/23	Research Proposal
10/30	Reading Response #3
11/20	Reading Response #4
12/11	Reading Response #5
12/16	Final Paper

Course Guidelines

Blackboard

Students are required to use Blackboard to keep up with the class schedule, readings, assignments, announcements, and other ongoing aspects of the course. Students should use and regularly check their UMBC email. The class schedule and readings are subject to change.

Writing Guidelines

This is a writing-intensive course. All assignments must be thoroughly proofread and clearly written. If you have difficulty writing, the campus' Writing Center provides both face-to-face and online tutoring. Visit the website (<https://lrc.umbc.edu/tutor/writing-center/>) to schedule an appointment. The Writing Center is located on the first floor of the A.O.K. Library, past the reference desk.

Keeping up with the Assignments

The readings are the foundation of this course. Our reading responses will be based on the reading assigned for that week. If you want to do well in the course, it is crucial that you complete all readings and assignments by their assigned dates.

Staying on Schedule

You will be asked to absorb and analyze a large amount of material during this course. You must work diligently to get through all the content. You may turn in material early but not late. Late assignments will not be accepted unless students go through the proper channels to receive an excused absence. I will be flexible (within reason) in accommodating any extenuating circumstances that students may encounter. Communication is key in receiving accommodations for makeup work.

Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is an important value at UMBC. *By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UMBC's scholarly community in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest standards of honesty. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and helping others to commit these acts are all forms of academic dishonesty. Academic misconduct could result in disciplinary action that may include, but is not limited to, suspension or dismissal.*

All members of the UMBC community are expected to make a commitment to academic honesty in their own actions and with others. Academic misconduct can result in disciplinary action that may include suspension or dismissal. The following are examples of academic misconduct that are not tolerated at UMBC:

- Cheating: Using or attempting to use unauthorized material, information, study aids, or another person's work in any academic exercise.
- Fabrication: Falsification or invention of any information or citation in an academic exercise.

- Facilitating academic misconduct: Helping or attempting to help another student commit an act of academic misconduct.
- Plagiarism: Knowingly, or by carelessness or negligence, representing as one's own, in any academic exercise, the intellectual or creative work of someone else.
- Dishonesty: Lack of truthfulness or sincerity when interacting with the faculty member regarding an academic exercise

Special Needs

If you have any special needs (learning disabilities, physical accommodations, language needs, etc.), please let me know *as soon as possible* (no later than the second week of class) so we can work together to meet those needs.

Religious Observations

Students will not be penalized for missing class due to religious observances. UMBC's absences policy for religious holidays can be found by visiting this link:

<https://provost.umbc.edu/files/2019/04/Religious-Holidays-2018-19.pdf>.

Disclosures of Sexual Misconduct and Child Abuse or Neglect

As an instructor, I am considered a Responsible Employee, per [UMBC's Policy on Prohibited Sexual Misconduct, Interpersonal Violence, and Other Related Misconduct](#) (located at <http://humanrelations.umbc.edu/sexual-misconduct/umbc-resource-page-for-sexual-misconduct-and-other-related-misconduct/>). While my goal is for you to be able to share information related to your life experiences through discussion and written work, I want to be transparent that as a Responsible Employee I am required to report disclosures of sexual assault, domestic violence, relationship violence, stalking, and/or gender-based harassment to the University's Title IX Coordinator.

As an instructor, I also have a mandatory obligation to report disclosures of or suspected instances of child abuse or neglect (www.usmh.usmd.edu/regents/bylaws/SectionVI/VI150.pdf).

The purpose of these reporting requirements is for the University to inform you of options, supports and resources; you will not be forced to file a report with the police. Further, you can receive supports and resources, even if you choose to not want any action taken. Please note that in certain situations, based on the nature of the disclosure, the University may need to act.

Course Schedule

Week 1: The Birth of the Prison	
9/1	
Readings	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i> (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 135-195.
Assignments	

Week 2: The Panopticon	
9/8	
Readings	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i> (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 195-231, 293-308.
Assignments	

Week 3: The “Inmate” & Total Institutions	
9/15	
Readings	Erving Goffman, <i>Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates</i> (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 1-63.
Assignments	Reading Response #1

Week 4: Bureaucracy & Management in Total Institutions	
9/22	
Readings	Erving Goffman, <i>Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates</i> (New York: Anchor Books, 1961), 64-125.
Assignments	

Week 5: Settler Colonialism & the Carceral State	
9/29	
Readings	Kelly Lytle-Hernandez, <i>City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965</i> (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2017), 1-63.
Assignments	

Week 6: Black Women Inmates & Convict Leasing in the American South	
10/6	
Readings	Sarah Haley, <i>No Mercy Here: Gender, Punishment, and the Making of Jim Crow Modernity</i> (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016), 1-57.
Assignments	Reading Response #2

Week 7: Constructing Black Criminality in the American North	
10/13	
Readings	Kali Gross, <i>Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910</i> (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 72-126.
Assignments	

Week 8: Midterm	
10/20	
Readings	Midterm Exam
Assignments	Research Proposal

Week 9: The Neoliberal State & the Birth of Mass Incarceration	
10/27	
Readings	Ruth Wilson Gilmore, <i>Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California</i> (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), 30-87.
Assignments	Reading Response #3

Week 10: The Criminalization of Poverty	
11/3	
Readings	Elizabeth Hinton, <i>From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America</i> (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 1-26, 64-95.
Assignments	

Week 11: Policing & State Power	
11/10	
Readings	Micol Seigel, <i>Violence Work: State Power and the Limits of Police</i> (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 1-51.
Assignments	

Week 12: Narratives from the Inside	
11/17	
Readings	Mumia Abu-Jamal, <i>Live from Death Row</i> (New York: Harper Perennial, 1996), 3-72.
Assignments	Reading Response #4

Week 13: Narratives on the Run	
11/24	
Readings	Assata Shakur, <i>Assata: An Autobiography</i> (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1987), 3-70.
Assignments	

Week 14: Reform or Abolition?	
12/1	
Readings	Angela Y. Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 9-59.
Assignments	

Week 15: Imagining Alternative Futures	
12/8	
Readings	Angela Y. Davis, <i>Are Prisons Obsolete?</i> (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003), 60-115.
Assignments	Reading Response #5