

**St. Francis Xavier University  
Department of Sociology**

Sociology 451.20  
Winter, 2020

Dr. David Lynes  
Nicholson Tower, Rm. 617

**Selected Topics in Criminal and Social Justice**

**Incarceration as a Social Signifier**

This course examines how the practices of incarceration of people convicted of criminal offenses can be read as an important expression of any society's value system. In the process of embodying this expression, incarceration's significance extends well beyond its role as a signifier by actually influencing what it signifies – the value and justification of the collective exercising authority over its members in specifically punitive ways.

The objective of the course is to understand incarceration as a signifier in this sense by examining the ideological and practical development and history of incarceration in both Europe and North America as formulated by Michel Foucault in his book *Discipline and Punish*. In conjunction with this examination (and to some extent, in contrast to it), we will also look at the roots of the present crisis developing from continually increasing incarceration rates around the world but in the United States in particular.

**Texts**

There are two required texts for this course:

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Toronto: Vintage, 1995).

Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: The New Press, 2012).

The readings from *Discipline and Punish* are assigned according to the listed dates below. Portions of *The New Jim Crow* will be assigned in class. Both books should be available in the university book store, but can also be found in any of the larger bookstores in most cities and can be ordered on line. Used copies may also be available. Most recent (soft cover) reprints of Foucault's book all maintain the original pagination. Any additional material will be made available on line via the Moodle site.

## Evaluation

The course grade will be based on a combination of tests and assignments designed to promote the critical analysis of various forms of culturally available information, conceptions and representations of punishment, incarceration and prisons.

Mid-Term test.....	25%
Essay assignment.....	25%
Final Exam.....	35%
In-class exercises.....	5%
Participation.....	10%

## Class Format

The course will be taught on line, and it will proceed largely synchronously, in keeping with University policy. This means that we will all be meeting on line together at set times which correspond to the times listed for this course in the university timetable. For this course that is on Mondays from 3:45 until approximately 5:00 pm and on Wednesdays from 2:15 until approximately 3:30. All times are Atlantic so you will need to account for this if you are in a different time zone. The class format and the speed at which the material is covered will be open for revision as the course develops, depending on the class' progress and facility with the material. However, the aim will always be to pursue the work within the context of open discussions and exercises, in addition to lectures and presentations. Please 'enter' the virtual classroom by clicking on "Online Classroom" link on the course Moodle page at the start of class. Just below this link are a series of notes and tutorials to help you navigate the process. If you have any difficulties in this regard, be sure to let me know.

**Please Note:** Virtual attendance is important for this course, as the in-class discussion is designed to enhance the appreciation of the text and reading material and is essential to the spirit of the course objectives. However, attendance is considered a prerequisite for, and not the substance of, the class participation component of the course. If, for technical reasons you are unable to virtually attend for any length of time, please let me know and we can attempt to find a remedy. Any absences should be explained.

## Office Hours

My office is in Nicholson Tower, Room 617, however this year office hours will be held virtually, meaning I may not physically be in the office during these times and the “meeting” will be on line. The virtual office hours are:

Tuesday	3:00 to 5:00
Thursday	2:00 to 4:00

There will be times when I am unable to be in the virtual office during the posted office hours due to committee and department meetings or unforeseen circumstances. If this happens, please send an email message and I will get back to you as soon as I can. Other times can be arranged by appointment if you are unable to make those listed. Contact me through e-mail to arrange a meeting or to ask any questions.

E-mail: <dlynes@stfx.ca>  
Phone: 902 867-3802

### **Reading and Assignment Schedule**

**Note:** Page references listed below refer to Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*. Readings from Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow* will be assigned in class.

#### **Readings**

September 14 – 16: Part One: Torture: “The Body of the Condemned” p. 3 – 31.

September 21 – 23: The Spectacle of the Scaffold” p. 32 – 69.

September 28 – 30: Part Two: Punishment: “Generalized Punishment” p. 73 – 103.

October 5 – 7: “The Gentle way of Punishment” p. 104 – 131.

#### **Mid-Term Issued**

October 14: Part Three: Discipline: “Docile Bodies” p. 135 – 169.

**Mid-Term Due Friday October 16 (by midnight).**

October 19 – 21: “Docile Bodies” (continued)

October 26 – 28: “The Means of Correct Training” p. 170 – 194.

November 2 – 4: “Panopticism” p. 195 – 228.

**Assignment: Issued**

November 9: Part Four: Prison: “Complete and Austere Institutions” p.231 – 256.

**Assignment Due November 13 (by midnight)**

November 16 – 18: “Illegalities and Delinquency” p. 257 – 292.

November 23 – 25: “The Carceral” p. 293 – 308

November 30: Conclusion.

**Assignments:**

**1<sup>st</sup> Assignment: Issued October 5<sup>th</sup> , Due Friday October 16<sup>th</sup> 2020 (Submitted to the Moodle Site by Midnight)**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment: Issued November 2<sup>nd</sup> , Due Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> , 2020 (Submitted to the Moodle Site by Midnight)**

**Final Exam. Issued the last day of class. Due TBA**

**Note:** Due to the time constrains of the course and the number of assignments, no assignments will be accepted beyond the day after the Due date, and only then with permission (exceptions for dire emergencies only).