

San José State University
College of Social Sciences/Department of Justice Studies
JS 104, Penal Politics and Institutions, Spring 2023

Course and Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Justin Strong
Office Location: MH 528
Telephone: Extension 2948
Email: justin.strong@sjsu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesdays 1-3 pm
Zoom: [Here](#)
Class Days/Time: Tuesdays/Thursdays 10:30am -11:45 am
Classroom: MH 520

Course Description

Interdisciplinary examination of issues of race, class, gender, ethnicity, economy, and culture as it relates to punishment, the penal process, and social control.

Course Format

In-person. Students will need to access Canvas in order to submit assignments and final papers.

Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Gain exposure to research demonstrating the political usage of penal institutions
2. Describe how political power and punishment are related and how this works to reproduce various forms of disadvantage and inequality
3. Illustrate the ways in which incarceration has been used as means to respond to social problems
4. Generate reflective questions on what is to be done in addressing the social harms and consequences of punishment

Required Texts/Readings

Jonathan Simon's, *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*

The course textbook can be fully accessed online through the San José State University website

Throughout the course we will also be listening to season 4 of the WBEZ Chicago podcast series, Motive
<https://www.wbez.org/shows/motive/8c9f445c-4f62-46d6-a7f6-dc70a835e99b>

Other Readings

Please see below. I will circulate readings to the class through Google drive.

Library Liaison

Nyle Monday, nyle.monday@sjsu.edu

Course Requirements and Assignments

Your course grade will be assessed based on reading reflection logs, weekly discussions, comprehension quizzes, and critical reaction papers.

Reflection logs (20%)

Each week you will write a reflection engaging all of the assigned material. These should not be terribly long, no more than a 1-2 pages double-spaced. Reflection Logs are meant to facilitate your engagement with the course materials and give you space to think about how the material might relate to your own experiences. Think of Reflection Logs as an organized document of reading notes. Reflections should include: 1. A general overview of the week's materials that summarizes major ideas and concepts 2. Reactions and responses to the material, i.e. what do you think of what you are reading? 3. Any connections you can draw to contemporary issues, popular culture, or personal experiences. Throughout the semester I may provide a specific prompt for you to consider in your reflection logs. Reflection logs are due the Monday before class and will be submitted on Canvas.

Weekly Discussions (20%)

Thursday classes will be focused on group discussion of the week's material. In groups you will record your responses to various prompts and activities and turn it in to me at the end of each class with each member's name listed. You will be able to miss up to three weekly discussion assignments.

Comprehension Quizzes (20%)

At various points throughout the quarter you will be assigned a quiz to be completed on Canvas. I will announce quizzes when they have been released and you will be given ample time to complete the quiz prior to our Thursday classes. Questions will only pertain to the material already covered in class. I will not quiz you on material we have not yet discussed together. Quizzes cannot be made up unless you have already arranged an excused absence with me. However, I will do my best to accommodate any extenuating circumstances that may present themselves.

Critical Reaction Papers (40%)

You will write two reaction papers that analyze a piece of media using concepts discussed in the course. Reaction papers will be between 4-5 pages double-spaced not counting references. More detailed instructions and a rubric will be made available. The first paper will be due Monday, March 20th by midnight and the second paper will be due Friday, May 19th by midnight.

Note that "Success in this course is based on the expectation that students will spend, for each unit of credit, a minimum of 45 hours over the length of the course (normally three hours per unit per week) for instruction, preparation/studying, or course related activities, including but not limited to internships, labs, and clinical practica. Other course structures will have equivalent workload expectations as described in the syllabus."

Determination of Grades

1. Reflection logs – 20%
2. Weekly Discussions – 20%
3. Comprehension Quizzes – 20%

4. Critical Reaction Papers – 40%

A plus = 96-100%

A = 93-95%

A minus = 90-92%

B plus = 86-89%

B = 83-85%

B minus = 80-82%

C plus = 76-79%

C = 73-75%

C minus = 70-72%

D plus = 66-69%

D = 63-65%

D minus = 60-62%

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](#), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on [Syllabus Information web page](#) (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>). Make sure to visit this page to review and be aware of these university policies and resources.

Week 1 – January 26th

- Review syllabus and course overview

Week 2 – January 31st – February 2nd

Davis, Chapters 1 and 2

Simon, Introduction

The road to mass incarceration YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YLiHZhixTEk>

Due

- Reflection log

Week 3 – February 7th – 9th

Simon, Chapter 1

Foucault, The body of the condemned

Motive, Episode 1

Week 4- February 14th – 16th

Simon, Chapter 2

Motive, Episode 2

Due

- Reflection log

Week 5 – February 21st – 23rd

Simon, Chapter 3
Motive, Episode 3

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/10/31/violent-crime-is-a-key-midterm-voting-issue-but-what-does-the-data-say/>

Due

- Reflection log

Week 6 – February 28th – March 2nd

Simon, Chapter 4
Motive, Episode 4

Due

- Reflection log

Week 7 – March 7th – 9th

Simon, Chapter 5
Motive, Episode 5

Due

- Reflection log

Week 8 – March 14th – 16th

Simon, Chapter 6
Prison State, Frontline

Due

- Reflection log

Week 9 – March 21st – 23rd

Gilmore, Chapter 2
Motive, Episode 6

Due

- Reflection log
- Critical Reaction Paper

Spring Break – March 27 – 31st

Week 11 – April 4th – 6th

Gilmore, Chapter 3
Motive, Episode 7

Due

- Reflection log

Week 12 – April 11th – 13th

Schoenfeld, Chapter 7

Cate (2022). The Mississippi model: Dangers of prison reform in the context of fiscal austerity
Trump and executions <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/dec/15/trump-administration-us-death-penalty-executions>

Due

- Reflection log

Week 13 – April 18th – 20th

Simon, Chapter 7

Zócalo Public Square podcast, What Would The End of Mass Incarceration Mean For Prison Towns?

Due

- Reflection log

Week 14th – April 25th – 27th

Simon, Chapter 8

The Marshall Project, <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2022/10/01/what-an-alabama-prisoners-strike-tells-us-about-prison-labor>

Demoncracy Now! Interview, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3lME6jMBy0>

Due

- Reflection log

Week 15th – May 2nd – 4th

Simon, Chapter 9

Is prison necessary? Ruth Wilson Gilmore might change your mind

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/17/magazine/prison-abolition-ruth-wilson-gilmore.html>

Gilmore Intercept interview, <https://theintercept.com/2020/06/10/ruth-wilson-gilmore-makes-the-case-for-abolition/> parts 1 and 2

Due

- Reflection log

Week 16th May 9th – 11th

Davis, Chapters 5 and 6

Sexton and Lee (2006). Figuring the prison: Prerequisites for Torture at Abu Ghraib
The prison within documentary

Due

- Reflection log

Finals Week

- Critical reaction paper due Friday, May 19th by midnight.