

Spring 2002

AJ 208
SEMINAR IN CORRECTIONS

Instructor: Mona Lynch
MH 513 / phone: 924-2958
e-mail: mlynch@email.sjsu.edu
Class meetings: Tuesdays, 5:30-8:15 PM; MH 526
Office hours: Tuesdays 2:00-5:30 PM; Thursdays 9:00-10:30 AM

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course will take an in-depth look at how we have traditionally punished and currently punish criminal behavior in our society. While the class will focus primarily on the U.S. for detailed illustration of penal practices, we will draw upon a range of sociological works which attempt to explain the evolution of punishment in a variety of western societies. This course is designed to introduce the students to theoretical perspectives on penal processes, so it does NOT aim to teach practical issues related to correctional policy. Rather, the goal is to uncover why punishment takes the particular shape it does in our society, and how that shape is influenced by social, structural, political, and cultural elements. In short, the course seeks to analyze several large questions related to legal punishment: Who is subject to punishment? Why do we punish and what purpose does it serve? What have social theorists suggested about the function of punishment in society? How do we punish?

We will explore the social justifications for punishment, including such purposes as moral cleansing, rehabilitation, deterrence, and incapacitation; and how and why these explicit goals have waxed and waned in popularity among criminal justice practitioners, politicians, and the general public. We will also look at what has been suggested by various sociological theorists as the possible implicit purposes of punishment, including the maintenance of economic divisions, class structure, and / or power relationships; and the strengthening of moral solidarity in society. We will then study the mechanics of punishment in light of the theoretical frameworks we have discussed. Within this inquiry, we will examine how the courts have interpreted the limits of acceptability in criminal punishment. Finally, we will look to the directions in which we appear to be heading with criminal punishment in this country: What do the recent efforts to reinstate some forms of public humiliation and shaming, such as the use of chain gangs and the various paddling proposals, reflect in terms of our punishment goals? Will the current expansion of prison systems across the nation eventually collapse and give way to other forms of punishments? Are there alternative punishments being developed and implemented with any success at present?

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS:

Each student is expected to gain a working understanding of various theoretical perspectives on state punishment, develop analytical skills through leading discussions and writing several critical papers. Thus, this class will ideally be a group effort. Each member will bring a unique perspective to a common topic of interest, and will ideally share that perspective on each week's topics with the other class members. While I have an outline (as delineated below) for the general shape of the course, I am looking forward to the intellectual contributions of each of you in our weekly seminar meetings. Therefore, I ask that you make an effort to be here each week, unless circumstances arise that make your attendance impossible.

In addition to attending the class meetings on Tuesday evenings, you need to: complete the required readings prior to the week's class so that you are prepared to discuss them; turn in a short typewritten set of questions or comments about the readings each week, be prepared to co-lead 3 seminars over the semester, and complete two short papers (approximately 5 pages each), to be assigned during the semester.

Your final grade for the course will be based upon your active participation in our seminar meetings and your written work. It should be clear that you need to attend class regularly and actively contribute to class discussions in order to successfully complete this course. If you know you will be unable to attend class consistently, you should not plan to take the course. Final grades will be determined as follows:

Participation in weekly discussions & completion of weekly reading responses:	25%
Co-leading 3 seminars:	25%
Paper #1	25%
Paper #2	25%

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Garland, David (1990). Punishment and Modern Society: A Study in Social Theory.

Abbott, Jack Henry (1981). In the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison.

Conover, Ted (2000). Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing

AJ 208 Course Reader (2002) Available at Maple Press, 431 E. San Carlos (next to Subway, just past 10th Street)..

TOPICS / ASSIGNMENTS / DUE DATES:

WEEK 1 (January 29): Introductions & course overview.

WEEK 2 (February 5): Theories of punishment: Introduction & Durkheim.
READ: Garland, Introduction-Chapter 3.

WEEK 3 (February 12): Theories of punishment: Marxist perspectives.
READ: Garland, Chapters 4-5.

WEEK 4 (February 19): Theories of punishment: Foucault & Weber
READ: Garland, Chapters 6-8.

WEEK 5 (February 26): Theories of punishment: Elias & Garland.
READ: Garland, Chapters 9-12.

WEEK 6 (March 5): The new penology
READ: Reader--Chapter 1.

WEEK 7 (March 12): The social psychology of prisons
READ: Reader--Chapter 2; begin Abbott.

WEEK 8 (March 19): Social psychology of prisons, continued.
READ: Continue Abbott; begin Conover.

WEEK 9 (March 26): **SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS**
FINISH READING ABBOTT AND CONOVER & WRITE ESSAY

WEEK 10 (April 2): The sociology of prisons.
READ: Reader—Chapter 3.
PAPER # 1 DUE

WEEK 11 (April 9): The sociology of parole and other penal practices.
READ: Reader--Chapter 4

WEEK 12 (April 16): 8th Amendment limits to punishment: Evolving or devolving standard of decency?

READ: Reader--Chapter 5

WEEK 13 (April 23): New theoretical perspectives on punishment.

READ: Reader—Chapter 6

WEEK 14 (April 30): Giving punishment: the crime control business.

READ: Chapter 7; Handouts.

WEEK 15 (May 7): The future of punishment in America & alternative possibilities.

READ: Reader--Chapter 8

WEEK 16 (May 14) Conclusion

PAPER #2 DUE

NO READING
