

Spring 2005

AJ 208  
SEMINAR IN PUNISHMENT

Instructor: Mona Lynch  
MH 513 / phone: 924-2958  
e-mail: mlynch@email.sjsu.edu  
Class meetings: Tuesdays, 5:30-8:15 PM  
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 how we 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/penal 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: Why, when, and who do we punish and what purpose does it serve? What have social theorists suggested about the function of punishment in society? What accounts for massive shifts in penal philosophies and practices, as we have seen happen over the past 30 years?

Within this inquiry, we will explore the social justifications for punishment, and how these are linked to broader cultural forces. We will also look at what has been suggested by various theorists as the implicit purposes of punishment and explanations for why we punish as we do, including explanations that suggest state punishment serves to maintain economic divisions, class structure, and/or power relationships; that punishment plays a role in strengthening moral solidarity in society; that punishment is a reflection of culture and cultural development, to name a few. We will then study the mechanics of punishment in light of the theoretical frameworks we have discussed. Within this section of the course, we will examine several specific penal institutions and/or practices to see how they have socially, politically, and culturally developed in the US. Among the specific practices we will examine are the prison, capital punishment, parole and community corrections, and the newer, trendy penal developments to see such changes.

## COURSE OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS:

Each student is expected to gain a working understanding of various theoretical perspectives on state punishment that are covered in the readings, develop analytical skills through leading discussions and writing a theoretically informed paper on a punishment topic of your choice (subject to my approval). Please note that the readings will be CHALLENGING and working through them is a necessary component of this class. That means that you must complete the required readings prior to the week's class so that you are prepared to discuss them in class.

In addition to doing the weekly readings and attending the class meetings on Tuesday evenings, you need to: turn in a short typewritten set of questions or comments about the readings each week, co-lead 2 seminars over the semester, and complete a paper proposal (1-2 pages) and fully developed paper (10-15 pages) on the approved proposal topic.

This class will ideally be a group effort. Each member will bring her or his perspective and insight, as informed by our weekly readings, and will 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 every effort to be here each week, unless circumstances arise that make your attendance impossible. If you know that you will have to miss more than two class meetings this semester, you should consider dropping the course and taking it at a later date when you will be able to attend regularly.

Your final grade for the course will be based upon your active participation in our seminar meetings and your written work. Again, it should be clear to you that you need to attend class regularly and actively contribute to class discussions in order to successfully complete this course. Active participation means thoughtful engagement with the readings and with the discussion that flows from them, not simply voicing one's opinion. Final grades will be determined as follows:

Participation in weekly discussions & completion of weekly reading responses:	250 points
Co-leading 2 seminars:	250 points
Paper Proposal	100 points
Paper	400 points
Total possible points	1000 pts.

A range = 900 points or above

B range = 800-899 points

C range = 700-799 points

D range = 600-699 points

F = 599 points or below

---

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Garland, David (2002). *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. University of Chicago Press. Available at Spartan and Roberts bookstores.

Davis, Angela (2003) *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Open Media Series. Available at Spartan and Roberts bookstores.

AJ 208 Course Reader (2005) Available at Maple Press, 431 E. San Carlos (next to Subway, just past 10<sup>th</sup> Street).

TOPICS / ASSIGNMENTS / DUE DATES:

WEEK 1 (February 1): Introductions & course overview.

WEEK 2 (February 8): Theories of punishment: Garland's perspective.  
READ: Garland, Introduction-Chapter 3.

WEEK 3 (February 15): Theories of punishment: Garland's perspective  
READ: Garland, Chapters 4-6.

WEEK 4 (February 22): Finish Garland; begin theories of punishment: other perspectives  
READ: Garland, Chapters 7-8; Reader, chapter 1

WEEK 5 (March 1): Theories of punishment: Other perspectives.  
READ: Reader, chapter 2

WEEK 6 (March 8): The prison: Introduction  
READ: Angela Davis, entire book

WEEK 7 (March 15): The sociology of prisons  
READ: Reader, chapter 3

WEEK 8 (March 22): Other perspectives on prisons.  
READ: Reader, chapter 4

**PAPER PROPOSAL DUE**

WEEK 9 (March 29): SPRING BREAK-NO CLASS

WEEK 10 (April 5): Parole and related practices.

READ: Reader—Chapter 5.

WEEK 11 (April 12): Capital punishment

READ: Reader--Chapter 6

WEEK 12 (April 19): Capital punishment, continued.

READ: Reader--Chapter 7

WEEK 13 (April 26): New penal fads.

READ: Reader—Chapter 8

WEEK 14 (May 3): Penal markets and the crime control business.

READ: Chapter 9

WEEK 15 (May 10): The future possibilities for punishment.

READ: Reader--Chapter 10

WEEK 16 (May 17) Conclusion

**PAPER DUE**

NO READING

---

DISCUSSION GROUP LEADER SIGN-UPS  
Sign up one time in one of the available spots listed below

THURSDAY, April 7

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY, May 5

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY, April 14

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY, May 12

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY, April 21

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

THURSDAY, April 28

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

DISCUSSION LEADER SIGN-UPS

Sign up two times in total for the semester, 1 time in each column

February 8

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

April 5

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

February 15

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

April 12

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

February 22

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

April 19

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

March 1

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

April 26

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

March 8

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

May 3

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

March 15

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

May 10

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

March 22

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

May 17

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_