Fall 2015

SOC 4098

Benjamin D. Weber

University of New Orleans

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Instructor: Benjamin D. Weber
Office hours: Th., 3:30-5:30pm
Office: Liberal Arts Bldg., 157

More people are currently incarcerated, per capita, in the United States than any other country in the world. Louisiana is arguably, the nation’s “prison capitol.” This course asks that we rethink the last two centuries of U.S. history by tracing the development of carceral forms both at home and abroad. Using the Louisiana State Penitentiary, Angola, as our case study we will investigate the historic roots of racialized mass incarceration and prisoner work, organizing, writing, and art over time. In addition to creating research projects using primary sources, students will have the opportunity to work with community organizations and participate in public events as part of the “Global Dialogues on Incarceration” public history project.

GLOBAL DIALOGUES ON INCARCERATION

In this course, we will help build the New Orleans piece of a national exhibit on incarceration. We will focus on Angola prison, and work with local youth and community organizations. We will be supported by the Midlo Center here at UNO and by the Humanities Action Lab at the New School in New York City. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a number of public events over the course of the year. There are twenty other universities contributing to this Global Dialogues on Incarceration project, and the national exhibit will open in NYC and then travel to all of the schools. You can find more information here: http://humanitiesactionlab.org/globaldialogues/incarceration/

LEARNING GOALS: In this course, students will…

- Analyze primary source materials in order to construct original historical arguments.
- Critically evaluate a range of scholarly positions related to histories of policing and prisons.
- Make connections between the past and the present through the methods of public history.
- Engage the public through events and solicit feedback from people most directly affected by the issues they are studying.
- Dialogue with students at other universities through online blog posts and video sessions.
- Create the local, Louisiana, piece of a traveling exhibit on mass incarceration.
READINGS

Each week you will read three types of sources: a primary source (evidence from the past), a secondary source (scholarly argument), and a comparative source (scholarly argument from another place and/or time). This approach is intended to help you to think critically, comparatively, and creatively about the central themes of the course. Many of the readings will be excerpts available online or in the course packet, but you will need to purchase the following texts:

- Course Packet (selected articles and book chapters)

ASSIGNMENTS

- **Assignment 1:** Project proposal and storyboard with research questions and selected quotes - *Due Sept. 15 by 2pm*
- **Assignment 2:** Reflection (1-2 pages) on presentation by Mark Strandquist or Marianne Fisher-Giorlando - *Due Sept. 29 by 2pm*
- **Midterm:** Blog post (3-5 pages) connecting an artifact from the prison’s past to our tour of Angola penitentiary - *Due October 8 by 2pm*
- **Assignment 3:** Primary source analysis (5 pages) related to your final project - *Due Oct. 27 by 2pm*
- **Assignment 4:** Poster presentation showing complete draft of final project - *Due Nov. 10 by 2pm (poster), public presentation on Nov. 14 at Ashé*
- **Assignment 5:** Blog post and comment on another university’s projects - *Due Nov. 19 by 2pm*
- **Final:** Multimedia project focusing on one aspect of Angola’s history, c.1865-1950, and postcard exchange, to be submitted to the national traveling exhibit - *Due Dec. 8, by 2pm*

REQUIREMENTS, HONOR CODE, ACCOMMODATIONS

- **Attendance:** You are expected to attend all regularly scheduled class meetings, and will be marked down one half letter grade for each unexcused absence. Public lectures, film screenings, and events are an integral part of this course, and attendance is required.
These events have been scheduled during class time whenever possible, and class will be canceled on the rare occasion that an event takes place outside of class time.

- **Expectations:** You are expected to have done all of the reading before class begins, and come prepared to actively engage in discussions and other in-class activities. Assignments should be completed by the start of class on the days they are due, and late will be graded down one half a letter grade for each day (24 hours) it is late.

- **Academic Integrity:** “Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at [http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu](http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu).”

- **Accommodations:** “It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information, please go to [http://www.ods.uno.edu](http://www.ods.uno.edu).”

**GRADING CRITERIA**

Assignments will be graded using a specific rubric and given a standard letter grade. Your grade for the course will be the result of your combined performance on all of course assignments, as outlined above.

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FINAL PROJECT

The final project is the main component of this course and allows you to dig deeply into a chosen topic by engaging in original research, making connections to central themes and aspects of the course, and working with people who are directly affected by the issues we are studying. You will employ the tools and techniques of multimedia scholarly design to produce a piece of our collective contribution to the Global Dialogues on Incarceration exhibit. Your final project will have three components: past, present, and future.

“WINDOWS THROUGH WALLS / ANGOLA OVER TIME”

1) You will work in teams of 2-3 to produce a “window” into one aspect of Angola’s past (c.1865-1950) using primary sources.
2) You will exchange postcards with prisoners at Angola to create the present part of your project.
3) You will incorporate artwork done by young people in response to the question, What does a world without prisons look like? to form the future element of your final project.

WINDOWS FROM PRISON

The idea for our postcard exchange takes its inspiration from Mark Strandquist’s Windows from Prison project. He has agreed to come do a workshop with our class and help you to brainstorm your own project ideas. You can find out more about Mark’s project here: www.windowsfromprison.com

SCHEDULE - Complete each week’s reading by Thursday, 2pm.

WEEK ONE: Where We Stand — “Louisiana as the World’s Prison Capitol” — Aug. 20
- Angela Davis, “There is an unbroken line of police violence in the U.S. that takes us all the way back to the days of slavery, The Guardian, 1-5.
- Marc Mauer, et al., The Sentencing Project, online: http://www.sentencingproject.org/
- The Humanities Action Lab (HAL) at The New School’s “Global Dialogues on Incarceration” Project: http://humanitiesactionlab.org/
WEEK TWO:  **Plantation and Prison**, Aug. 25 and 27


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


#REHUMANIZE FOR ALBERT WOODFOX EXHIBIT, AUG. 8 — SEPT. 7
UNO-ST. CLAUDE GALLERY, 2429 ST. CLAUDE ST.

WEEK THREE:  **Emancipation and Incarceration**, Sept. 1 and 3


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


WEEK FOUR:  **Convict Labor**, Sept. 8 and 10

- Matthew Mancini, “The Road to Angola,” in *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*, 144-152.


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


“WINDOWS FROM PRISON” PRESENTATION BY MARK STRANDQUIST
TUES. SEPT. 8, 2-3:15PM, UNO LIBRARY 4TH FLOOR

WEEK FIVE: **Racial Violence**, Sept. 15 and 17

**Project proposal and storyboard due Sept. 15**


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


SCREENING: **THE ANGOLA 3: BLACK PANTHERS AND THE LAST SLAVE PLANTATION**
TUES. SEPT. 15, 4:30-6:30PM, LIBERAL ARTS BLDG. RM.197

WEEK SIX: **Gendered Violence**, Sept. 22 and 24

• Angela Davis, Ch.4: “How Gender Structures the Prison System,” in *Are Prisons Obsolete*, 60-79.

Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

“WOMEN AT THE WALLS” PRESENTATION BY MARIANNE FISHER-GIORLANDO
THURS. SEPT. 24, 2-3:15PM, UNO LIBRARY 4TH FLOOR

WEEK SEVEN: *Carceral State*, Sept. 29 and Oct. 1

**Reflection on Strandquist or Fisher-Giorlando presentation due Sept. 29**

• Mark T. Carleton, “America’s Worst Prison, 1940-1956” in *Politics and Punishment*, Ch. 6, 135-166.

Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

TOUR OF LOUISIANA STATE PENITENTIARY, ANGOLA
THURS. OCT. 1, 8AM-5PM (2 HOURS AWAY)

WEEK EIGHT: *Racial Capitalism*, Oct. 6 and 8 [MIDTERMS]
Blog post connecting artifact to tour of Angola due Oct. 8


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


WEEK NINE: *Carceral Empire*, Oct. 13 [4:30-6:30] and [Oct. 15 is FALL BREAK]


• Paul Street, “Empire Abroad and Prisons at Home: Dark Connections,” *History is a Weapon* online, 1-6.


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:


• Laleh Kalili, *Time in the Shadows: Confinement and Counterinsurgencies* (Stanford, 2012), Introduction and Ch.5.

FILM SCREENING: *THE FARM*, OCT. 13, 4:30-6:30PM

[IN PLACE OF REGULARLY SCHEDULED CLASS TIME, 2-3:15PM]

WEEK TEN: *Imperial Policing*, Oct. 20 and 22


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

WEEK ELEVEN: **Prisoner Writing**, Oct. 27 and 29 [Event in place of class]

**Primary source analysis due Oct. 27**

- Assata, Assata: An Autobiography, 117-274
- Robert Hillary King, From the Bottom of the Heap, 124-245

Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

“YOUTH, ART, AND SOCIAL CHANGE” EVENT WITH LCCR
THURS. OCT. 29 (MYRTLE BANKS BLDG., ORETHA CASTLE HALEY BLVD.)

WEEK TWELVE: **Prisoner Organizing**, Nov. 3 and 5


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:
• Dan Berger, Captive Nation: Black Prison Organizing in the Civil Rights Era (Univ. of North Carolina, 2014), Introduction, 1-25.

WEEK THIRTEEN: **Prisoner Art**, Nov. 10 and Nov. 14
[No class Nov. 12 because of presentation Nov. 14]

Poster due Nov. 10, public presentation at Ashé Nov. 14

• Jillian Steinhauer, “Art Behind Bars Provides a Key to Prospect New Orleans,” Hyperallergic, 22 Jan., 2015, 1-11.
• Benjamin J. Harbert, Editor’s Introduction, (American Music, 2013), 127-133

Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:
• Bruce Jackson, Wake Up Dead Man: Hard Labor and the Southern Blues, Introduction xix-xxvi; Texas Convict Worksong Tradition, 29-46
• Benjamin J. Harbert, E”Only Time: Musical Means to the Personal, the Private, and the Polis at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women,” (American Music, 2013), 203-240.

PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF PROJECTS, ASHE CULTURAL ARTS CENTER, SAT. NOV. 14, (1712 ORETHA CASTLE HALEY BLVD.)

WEEK FOURTEEN: **Public History and Incarceration**, Nov. 17 and 19

Blog post and comment on another university’s projects due Nov. 19


Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

WEEK FIFTEEN: *Racial Innocence*, Nov. 24 [Nov. 27 is T-Giving]
• Naomi Murakawa, *The First Civil Right: How Liberals Built Prison America* (Ch. 1-2)

Required for graduate students / Recommended for all:

WEEK SIXTEEN: *Where we are Headed*, Dec. 1 and 3
• Angels Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 7-59; 84-128

**FINAL PROJECT DUE DEC. 8 BY 5PM**