

**PLSC/WGSS 379: GENDER, POLITICS, AND PRISON**

**SPRING 2020**

**When:** TUESDAY 1:30-4:10 pm

**Where:** Weinstein Hall, Room 209

Dr. Andrea Y. Simpson, Instructor

Office: Weinstein Hall, Room 202K

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-1 pm and by appointment

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Course Blog: <https://blog.richmond.edu/genderpoliticsprison/>

Welcome to PLSC/WGSS 379: Gender, Politics, and Prisons. I have been teaching a course called “Money, Politics, and Prisons” for about 18 years. This year, I am modifying that course to focus on the role of gender in the prison industrial complex.

This is my 27th year in the professoriate. I began teaching at the University of Washington in Seattle in 1993, and came to the University of Richmond in 2004 because I knew it was the kind of institution that would value student-centered instruction. I think learning is enhanced by creating a community in the classroom. We do that by respecting each other’s perspectives and making sure that we come together prepared to talk about the readings. My teaching style is highly interactive. We are learning from each other. Although I am the Ph.D. in the room, I don’t have all of the answers. I cannot see some things in ways that may be beneficial to my understanding of the subject. Our higher education system requires an assessment of student performance. This is always challenging for me because I fear that a focus on grades impedes learning. You should know that while I provide ample feedback, improvement in my course means a great deal to me. At the end of the day, when I see improvement in your performance, I must factor it into your final grade. Remember that asking good questions are as good as giving good answers in class.

This is the maiden voyage of this course, so as we learn together, I will appreciate feedback from you along the way on readings, assignments, and any other aspect of the course.

Women’s incarceration has doubled the pace of men’s incarceration in recent decades. More women are in local jails than men. State prisons for women have fewer rehabilitative programs than prisons for men. One state, Oklahoma, imprisons more women than any other state. What is causing this increase in the incarceration of women? Why do women have fewer opportunities than men to learn and develop skills? These are the questions driving our inquiry. We will visit at least one women’s prison during the semester as well as explore the theory, history, and policies that inform how gender shapes and limits rehabilitation in jails and prisons.

Course Goals and Objectives

After reading, discussing, and writing about the political salience of crime, the economy of prison construction, and the evolution of the prison industrial complex, students will be able to explain:

* why the population of women in prison is growing
* why gender matters in the trial and incarceration process
* what happens to women who are pregnant or become pregnant in prison
* the historical link between slavery and incarceration
* how inmate labor is exploited in women’s prisons
* how media influences the perception of women’s prisons, and how this perception affects policy decisions

We will focus on the following assignments to hone your ability to integrate and synthesize course material, lead substantive discussions and think critically:

Response Papers

One Major Paper

Curation

Participation in class and on the blog

Field Notes from Our Field Trip to a Women’s Prison

Learning about restorative justice along with other alternatives to the United States prison system, students will be able to understand how the political and economic advantages of the current system are disincentives to reform.

**Course Readings**

Texts

Hayden, Erica Rhodes and Theresa R. Jach, Editors. 2017. *Incarcerated Women: A History*

*of Sturggles, Oppression, and Resistance in American Prisons*. Lantham, Maryland: Lexington Books.

Stanley, Eric A. and Nat Smith, Editors. 2015. *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the*

*Prison Industrial Complex*. Chico: AK Press.

McCorkel, Jill A. 2013. *Breaking Women: Gender, Race, and the New Politics of Imprisonment*.

New York: New York University Press.

Burton, Susan, and Cari Lynn. 2017. *Becoming Ms. Burton*. New York: The New Press.

Articles

All articles are accessible on the blog at: <https://blog.richmond.edu/genderpoliticsprison/>

**Grading and Assignments**

Response Paper: 15*%*

Final Paper: 20%

Participation: 25% (1**5%** will come from your curation assignments)

Presentation: 15%- Based on your final paper.

Midterm: 25%

Response Paper

Following are some tips for writing your papers:

1. You begin your paper by telling the reader what text or documentary you

will address along with a brief overview of the text or documentary.

2. You explain what aspect of the reading or documentary you are

responding to and why.

3. You define, if necessary, the statement or argument to which you are

responding.

4. State your position clearly and succinctly.

5. Defend your position.

6. Conclude concisely.

I will expect you to provide as many sources as you need to support your perspective. Be sure to be clear about both the author’s argument so that you do not make the mistake of addressing a point never made by the author.

More tips are available on the course blog site.

Curation Assignments and the Discussion Board

Each week a student or a team of students will present the readings and lead the discussion. After students are assigned a reading, they will post comments and/or a summary of the readings on the blog site. All other students are required to respond to their comments, and the discussion leaders must most a response to their comments. The postings should be up by Friday, and all responses must be up by Monday at noon.

Classroom Protocol Regarding Assignments

In-class exercises/quizzes and homework cannot be made up for any reason. No assignments will be accepted after class on the due date except by prior arrangement or in the case of authentic, verifiable emergency*. If a student does not turn in an assignment on the due date and has not consulted with the instructor beforehand, the student will receive a “0” (zero) on that assignment.* *Late assignments are docked one letter grade for each class day late. After four late days, a late assignment will automatically be given a zero.* After a grade is returned, students have one week to resolve questions about the grade with the instructor. Questions about a grade must be submitted first in writing. After one week, the grade is final.

In-Class Participation

“A” for class participation is awarded when students regularly initiate discussion. This means coming to class thoroughly familiar with the assigned reading and, therefore, prepared to raise questions, to open discussion, to identify topics of interest in the reading, and actively engage other students in the discussion. We also factor in your performance on the assigned presentations made on weekly viewing assignments. (This does not mean monopolizing a discussion, or shutting others out, or talking for its own sake rather than to make a point about the topic). [90-100 points]

“B” for class participation is awarded to students who participate regularly and productively in class discussion, who are prepared, and who are willing to engage. Students who earn “Bs” differ from “A” students in that the latter are self-starters who do not rely on the instructor's questions to set the agenda for discussion. [80-89 points]

“C” for class participation is awarded to those who participate on a regular, but less frequent basis than the B student. Students who earn “Cs” arrive prepared for class, but their contributions will indicate that less thought has been given to assigned materials. [70-79 points]

“D” for class participation is given to those who contribute infrequently to the discussion and whose contributions do not appear to arise from thoughtful consideration of the assignments. [60-69 points]

“F” for non-participation in class discussion. Of course, participation is impossible if you do not attend class. Frequent absences mandate F grades. [0-60 points]

Writing Expectations

My standards for writing are rigorous. I will assess your writing based on clarity, organization, word usage, and sentence construction. You should have a clear understanding of baseline standards in these areas. I plan to edit carefully each assignment, including in-class writing assignments, for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical mistakes. I strongly you recommend a good writing book. My favorite tools are *On Writing Well*, by William Zinsser and *Woe Is I* by Patricia T. O’Connor. Other excellent writing tools are: *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves*: *The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynn Truss and *Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr.

Remember that running a “spell check” through your Word program is not the same as proofreading your work. Some students find it helpful to read their papers aloud to find errors. Please seek help from the Writing Center and other resources listed on the blog. I am available for consultation via email, during office hours, and by appointment.

* Your topic should be narrow enough to write a concise and convincing piece of research
* Anyone who reads your paper should understand it. You are writing for anyone who is interested; therefore, you must define your terms and organize your paper. Topic headings are a good way to lead the reader through your argument.
* Personal experiences and observations do not carry as much weight as an academic publication. Anecdotes and stories can illuminate, but they are no substitute for hard research, whether it is qualitative or quantitative.
* Avoid the temptation to write something you think I will agree with—you cannot be sure of my opinion in this class. During many classes, I will play “devil’s advocate” to spark discussion and to help you to think more critically. Integrity in writing includes writing about something that you believe in, not something that you believe can yield extra points from the professor.

Attendance

**Because class discussion is at the heart of this course, you are required to be in class, and what we do in the course of our class meetings will determine a large portion of your grade. Excused absences for illness or other crucial events are allowed.**

Students are responsible for all information in the class, regardless of their personal attendance. If a student is absent, it is his or her responsibility to inquire about what they have missed. Absences due to university activities (e.g., sports, mock trial, etc.) must be discussed with the instructor before the relevant class period(s). An official notice must be shown to the instructor. Arrangements concerning absences are entirely at the instructor's discretion.

Please be on time for class to avoid unnecessary disruptions of speeches, lectures, and discussions.

We live in a digital age and you may need your laptop, tablet, or other device to take notes or to do in-class research. We will also do a lot of class discussion, so please be ready for us to ask you to put your screens away.

Grievance Procedures

Occasionally, students are unsatisfied with some dimension of the course. In such cases, you should first provide a written argument in support of your position to the instructors and request a meeting. All grade appeals on specific assignments must be made within one week of the return of the assignment.

\*\*Any students who need accommodations for learning or who have particular needs are invited to share these concerns or requests with the instructors as soon as possible.

Academic Honesty: Pledging

Students are expected to pledge the following statement on all assignments turned in for credit, including exams, papers and laboratory reports: "I pledge that I have neither received nor given unauthorized assistance during the completion of this work." Academic honesty is—defined broadly and simply—the performance of all academic work without cheating, lying, stealing, or receiving assistance from any other person or using any source of information not appropriately authorized or attributed. The University of Richmond and your professors take academic honesty very seriously.

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. The penalties for academic dishonesty are severe and ignorance is not an acceptable defense.

For more information visit:

<http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/honor/the-honor-code.html>

**Course Schedule**

Tuesday, January 14 Review syllabus; orientation for the course blog

Readings: “Can We Build a Better Women’s Prison?”

*The Washington Post Magazine*

Tuesday, January 21 Hayden and Jach, *Incarcerated Women*, Introduction-

Chapter 5

Tuesday, January 28 Hayden and Jach, *Incarcerated Women*, Chapters 6-8

Tuesday, February 4 Readings: McCorkel, *Breaking Women*, Chapters 1-4

DUE TODAY, 2/4: FIRST RESPONSE PAPER

Tuesday, February 11 Readings: McCorkel, *Breaking Women*, Chapters 5-

Conclusion

Tuesday, February 18 Readings: Tasca, et al., “The Role of Parental Status

and Involvement in Sentence Length Decisions: A

Comparison of Men and Women Sentenced to

Prison.”*Crime and Deliquency* 65:4, 1899-1924.

DUE TODAY, 2/18: PAPER TOPIC AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tuesday, February 25 Review and Midterm Assessment

Tuesday, March 3 Midterm-Open Notes

**Tuesday, March 10-SPRING BREAK, NO CLASSES**

Tuesday, March 17 Reading: *Captive Genders*

Introduction

“Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We’ve Got”

“Looking Back: The Bathhouse Raids in Toronto, 1981”

“From a Native Trans Daughter: Carceral Refusal, Settler Colonialism, Re-Routing the Routes of an Indigenous Abolitionist Imaginary”

“Regulatory Sites: Management, Confinement, and HIV/AIDs”

**FOR EXTRA CREDIT YOU MAY ATTEND THE FOLLOWING AND TURN IN A ONE PAGE RESPONSE**

Loretta Ross

***Reproductive Justice as Human Rights***

7:00 pm

Jepson Alumni Center, Robins Pavilion

*Westhampton/WILL\*/WGSS Womxn’s History Month Speaker*

**Loretta Ross** is the co-founder and former National Coordinator of the SisterSong Women of Color Reproductive Justice Collective. She is the co-author of *Reproductive Justice: An Introduction* and *Undivided Rights: Women of Color Organize for Reproductive Justice*. Reproductive Justice, a term coined by African American women following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, utilizes a human rights framework to look at reproductive oppression, sterilization abuse, immigration restrictions, gun culture, rape culture, the prison-to-school pipeline, and more.

Tuesday, March 24 Readings: *Captive Genders*

“How to Make Prisons Disappear: Queer Immigrants, the Shackles of Love, and the Invisibility of the Prison Industrial Complex.”

“Identities Under Siege: Violence Against Transpersons of Color”

“Out of Compliance: Masculine-Identified People in Women’s Prisons:

“No One Enters Like Them: Health, Gender Variance, and the PIC”

“Transforming Carceral Logics: 10 Reasons to Dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex Using a Queer/Trans Analysis”

Tuesday, March 31 Reading: *Becoming Mrs. Burton*, Chapters 1-20

Tuesday, April 7 Reading: *Becoming Mrs. Burton*, Chapters 21-39

Tuesday, April 14 Presentations

Tuesday, April 21 Presentations