

WRA 441.001 Social Justice as Rhetorical

Practice: Prison Writing

Class Time:

Office Hours:

Building & Room:

Final Exam:

Course Description

This course frames writing practices, strategies, and advocacy from a rhetorical lens that examines prison writing both by and about prisoners and the U.S. carceral state, thus considering the frisson that may exist between inside and outside representations.

Students will use rhetorical approaches to examine and understand how writings about and by (formerly) incarcerated individuals in efforts to reflect and advance social justice principles specific to concerns about the human condition in places of confinement in relation to unequal power relations. Through such analyses students will explore the relationship of these portrayals to larger aims of 'giving voice' and creating social awareness of the specific plight of the incarcerated.

Past Student Testimony: "Engaging with multiple forms of prison writing throughout this semester fundamentally reshaped my understanding of social justice as something built and enacted through rhetoric, rather than as a system framed by inactionable injustices or by incarceration understood solely as a legal or political issue. This course and its materials made clear to me that rhetoric does not just simply describe injustices, it persistently shapes/drives how they are understood, viewed, justified, and challenged."

At the same time, students will analyze the often ambiguous and/or limited role of such writings and writing programs in amplifying the voices and works of incarcerated learners/writers and the complex ethical implications and rhetorical decisions thus entailed. The course will invite the students themselves to engage and join ongoing conversations about such issues, vis-à-vis a research or advocacy-focused writing project that arises from the term's coursework and discussions. (Students may be interested in the [Creative Collaboration with Incarcerated Youth](#), MSU Arts Living-Learning Community.)

Course Learning Goals/Objectives:

In this course, students will:

- develop understanding of social justice practices and the praxis of prison writing rhetorics;
- deepen and demonstrate understanding of rhetorical moves through community-focused and inclusive approaches to writing;
- hone their active listening, collaborative writing, and problem-solving skills;
- demonstrate an understanding of how agency, writing, and critical engagement can forward social change, especially in the mass incarceration system
- explore and examine the role of writing programs in preparing incarcerated people for reintegration into society;
- develop and practice social justice and inclusive approaches to writing and community engagement to promote reformation and transform injustices of the mass incarceration system; and
- deepen understandings of the complex rhetorical representations and cultural negotiations of and by prison populations, in the context of societal and institutional agendas.

Course Activities and Projects

Readings:

The readings will include ~~public policies~~, journalistic writings, critical perspectives on carceral institutions, writing-related educational/creative outreach programs, and incarcerated individuals' own experiences. Most readings will be free scanned PDFs or academic journal articles, but we have 3 required textbooks.

Required Textbooks

- Angela Y. Davis. [*Are Prisons Obsolete?*](#) New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.
- Jimmy Santiago Baca. *A Place to Stand*. New York: Grove Press, 2002.
- Leonard Peltier, United States Prisoner #89637-132. *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance*. Ed. Harvey Arden. New York: St. Martin's Griffin: 1999.

Course assignments:

- **Short Writings [In-Class Projects] (4)**, in a few pages, depending on the project, explore and examine the rhetorical features a text uses to deliver its message(s); explain the connection between different authors or texts; illuminate

competing perspectives. [See Course Schedule for more information.]

- **Student-Led Discussion (1):** You will select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss. (See [Discussion Question Guide](#).)
- **Class Manifesto Contribution: A Reflective Project (1)** that draws on the semester's work, considers what you learned about social justice, in the context of prison writing (broadly considered), as a rhetorical practice, and speculates about how you might apply your learning beyond the classroom. You will theorize the rhetorical choices authors are making, and reflect upon ways in which writing can work as an agent for social justice, equity, and inclusion; transformational change; and community building.

You will draft a 3-4-page statement synthesizing what you have learned citing at least 2 different kinds of prison writing. These statements will be compiled into a collective "manifesto" drawing from your past analyses and speculations about applying your learning in the future.

- Final Exam: Self-Assessment:

Assessment:

I am incorporating a contract for grading and evaluation in our class, which avoids the use of grades and numerical values on assignments, other than to indicate Completion or Lateness in D2L. Your final course grade will be determined by completed work and continual improvement in the quality of your writing, thinking, reading, completing assignments, and actively engaging in the learning process. This doesn't mean, however, that quality of work matters less; we will regularly address the quality of your writing. The difference is in this class we focus on improving our rhetorical awareness and skill, critical thinking, and methods of rhetorical awareness through concerted, long-term work and collaborative efforts. Such an approach attempts to avoid comparing the quality of your work to your classmates' or to some abstract notion of standards. When it comes to evaluating writing, my goal as your professor is to create opportunities for receiving and providing feedback helping us all evolve and grow as thinkers and writers. That is, we will try to create a culture of supportive learning. This is a culture where you, your colleagues, and I function as allies, fellow-travelers with various skills, experiences, and talents that we offer the group, rather than adversaries working against each other for grades or recognition or approval. In these ways, and in this context of experiences, we will come to know more immediately that quality is

always known as both a contextual and rhetorical construction open to visions and re-visions.

Taking grades out of the class will allow you the freedom to take risks and really work hard on thinking at the fringes and expressing yourself authentically. Taking risks—even if they don't result in quality—can show us areas for improvement, misunderstandings, and provide opportunities to grow and change. Recognizing and acting on these areas is where learning takes place. The fear and anxiety over the penalty for taking risks that don't pay off extinguishes the motivation to learn deeply. Furthermore, since I won't be assigning a number or letter grade to anything (other than to track completion in D2L) and since my feedback will be less frequent than your peers' feedback, this makes your colleagues' feedback and your own self-assessments all the more valuable. Practice in giving and receiving feedback will help you listen carefully to your colleagues' differing judgments, build self-assessment strategies, and enhance skills in critical self-reflection, all of which function apart from a teacher's approval. I want you to learn to assess the worth of those judgments for your work and make informed, careful decisions in your writing that you can explain to others. Such assessments will require time and critical thinking.

One of the main goals of Grading Contracts is to meet you where you are in your reading and writing experiences and to support you in growing as a critical thinker, reader, writer, communicator, and collaborator. In this way, growth is a marker of quality. Additionally, the purpose is to ensure students are having the opportunity to work in a just environment that adapts to their needs and equally supports each person's learning. Therefore, when necessary I will work with people on a case-by-case basis to determine how best to accommodate their needs as a learner and the course's learning outcomes. (If you really need to have a grade, please see me during Open Office Hours to discuss this.) Ultimately, the Grading Contract functions as a model for forming professional relationships and professional communication practices because the activities surrounding communication are the very activities you will enact in your professional life.

Grading contracts in writing-intensive courses are valuable for a number of reasons, including that they offer you the opportunity to be experimental and exploratory in your writing—to take risks, rather than only producing writing that is thought to be “correct” or doing exactly and only “what the assignment requires.” To list the advantages of Grading Contracts, they:

- Value the risks, time, and labor you decide to commit to the class;
- Provide you with a clear and concrete understanding of your university recognized grade at all times throughout the semester because they are simple and easy to calculate;

- Do not penalize or reward you for the level of knowledge about and experience you have with writing and language prior to entering our class because all students have the same potential to earn a 4.0;
- Privilege students who are investing the time, energy, and effort into literacy learning.

While grading contracts focus on quantifiable outcomes, like attendance, engagement, and completion, that does not mean that you will not be expected to revise your writing and work for quality. Grading contracts function on the belief that quality thinking and writing is the result of one's effort in, and evolving understandings of, the course material, authentic striving to achieve the course objectives, and the writing process.

Course Grade	# of Late Assignments	Contributions to Class Discussion	Quality: (Level of Improvement; Risk-Taking; Critical Thinking; Rhetorical Analyses; Collaboration; Engagement; depth of thought)
4.0	0	Exceptional	Exceptional
3.5	0	Superior	Superior
3.0	1	Superior	Superior
2.5	2	Clear Progress	Clear Progression
2.0	2	Clear Progress	Clear Progression
1.5	3	Little or No Indication	Struggling
1.0-0.0	3	Little or No Indication	Little or No Indication
All "Assignments" must be submitted to earn credit for this class. (If you have extenuating circumstances that will affect your ability to complete the assignments, please let me know as soon as you can.)			
D2L Gradebook Legend			
Incomplete			0
Incomplete/Late			1
Complete & On-Time			2

Assignments:

- Short In-Class Writings (4) [Written in Pairs, Optional]
- Your Reading Choice & Leading Discussion (1)
- Collaborative, Reflective Class Manifesto (1)
- Final Exam: Self-Assessment

Weekly class meetings:

Class meetings will be offered in-person and will be conversational, entailing examining, applying, and discussing rhetorical strategies and creating rhetorical analyses of writings by formerly incarcerated people and writings produced by those engaging and assisting incarcerated people. Students will choose one class period to lead discussion. Our meetings foster a community of critical inquiry wherein students or groups will present research, projects, on-going work, and share questions, responses, and in-class writings.

Community Agreements

- Never treat people as a means only, but rather as ends unto themselves.
- We encourage discussions that focus on the work, not the person.
- We practice active listening and engagement.
- We assume good intentions but take responsibility for negative effects.
- We give credit where credit is due.
- We value transparency.
- We support one another's work and welcome support for our own.
- We value fair and transparent labor relationships, and we work actively to counter exploitation.
- We encourage creativity and experimentation with our thinking and writing.

Course Discussion Culture: Goals, Norms, and Practices

- This is a safe space to respond and listen actively;
- There is a human being on the other side of the text, if providing feedback on written work;
- Seek to extend the discussion of a topic to probe deeper into the analysis (i.e. I agree, or like, your point about X, and I would add. . . . or Your point about Y is intriguing. Do you think . . . ?);
- People appreciate being succinct;
- Silence is okay as it can be time to reflect on and process challenging points;
- Disagreements are productive; seek understanding even if people disagree (i.e. Am I understanding you correctly when you said X?)

Policies

Absences

The course offers 2 absences. More than 2 absences will result in a course grade reduced by half (0.5).

Exceptional Exceptions (i.e. Sh*t Happens) We all live (overly) full and tenuous lives and this policy is meant to include any life event beyond your control. Any absence, and resulting Late Work, due to an event beyond your control will not count against you under the condition that you provide verifiable and substantiating documentation or some other form of supporting evidence. If you find yourself in an exceptional situation, **talk to me**. We will work out the details.

Late Work

Late work will not be accepted after the last regularly scheduled class meeting.

Please, if you ever feel as though you are falling behind or cannot keep up, talk with us about your concerns. Together we will work toward a solution. Do not cut corners or take matters into your own hands. Involve us.

Exceptions: University, Family Misfortune, and Military Obligations

Any absence, and resulting late work, due to a university-sponsored group activity (e.g. sporting event or artistic performance like marching band) will not count against you, as stipulated by university policy, under the condition that written, verifiable documentation is provided before the event or absence. This same policy applies to military obligations.

The policy will allow us to determine in advance how best to meet course obligations and maintain your level of performance despite an absence. If an unfortunate event should occur in your immediate family, please ask your Academic Counselor about an excused Family Bereavement leave of absence. We will work together to see you through any misfortunes.

Resources

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation. Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Students with disabilities should contact the Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities to establish reasonable accommodations. For an appointment with a disability specialist, call 353-9642 (voice), 355-1293 (TTY), or visit <http://MYProfile.rcpd.msu.edu>

Ombudsman Student Advocacy https://ombud.msu.edu/ (517) 353-8830	MSU Center for Survivors https://centerforsurvivors.msu.edu/sexual-assault-healthcare-program/ 517-353-2700
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MSU CAPS_ - Counseling and Psychiatric Services https://caps.msu.edu/ (517) 355-8270	RCPD - Resource Center for Persons with Disabilities https://www.rcpd.msu.edu/ (517) 884-7273
Prevention, Outreach, and Education https://poe.msu.edu/ 517-355-3865	Office of Cultural & Academic Transitions https://ocat.msu.edu/ 517-353-7745
Gender and Sexuality Campus Center https://gsccl.msu.edu/ 517-353-9520	Food Bank https://foodbank.msu.edu/ (517) 432-5136
MSU Safety App https://dpps.msu.edu/safety-tools/safemssu-app	Police and Public Safety https://dpps.msu.edu/ (517) 355-2221

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative AI tools (e.g. ChatGPT, CoPilot, Dall-e, etc.) is permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Brainstorming and refining your ideas;
- Fine tuning your research questions;
- Finding information on your topic;
- Drafting an outline to organize your thoughts; and
- Checking grammar and style.

The use of generative AI tools is NOT permitted in this course for the following activities:

- Impersonating you in classroom contexts, such as by using the tool to compose discussion board prompts assigned to you or content that you put into a Zoom chat.
- Completing group work that your group has assigned to you, unless it is mutually agreed within your group and in alignment with course policy that you may utilize the tool.
- Writing a draft of a writing assignment.
- Writing entire sentences, paragraphs or papers to complete class assignments.

You are responsible for the information you submit based on an AI query (for instance, that it does not violate intellectual property laws, or contain misinformation or unethical content). Your use of AI tools must be properly documented and cited in order to stay

within university policies on academic integrity and the Spartan Code of Honor Academic Pledge. Please follow your discipline’s guidelines for citing generative AI. Any assignment that is found to have used generative AI tools in unauthorized ways will be treated as a violation of university policies on academic integrity. When in doubt about permitted usage, please ask for clarification.

Course Schedule

Class Day	Activities, Readings & Writing Assigned	What’s Due
Week 1: Introduction to Mass Incarceration System		
M 8.25	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Syllabus Review● “Facts about Mass Incarceration” Prison Policy Initiative.	

W 8.27	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner. Mass Incarceration: The Whole Pie 2025. March 14, 2023 https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2025.html • Betts, Reginald Dwayne. (2015-2016). Only Once I Thought about Suicide. Yale Law Journal Forum, 125, 222-229. • Reynolds, Tina. "Glossary of Terms." Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. • Correctional Association of New York. "Women in Prison Project." Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. • Vanderford, Anna. "Double Time/Borrowed Time/Time's Up." August 6, 2018. 	
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Week 2: Are Prisons Obsolete?

M 9.1	No Class: Labor Day Holiday	
W 9.3	<p>Readings</p> <p>Two groups will each have three chapters.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angela Y. Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete? New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. (Chapters 1-3) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Angela Y. Davis, Are Prisons Obsolete? New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003. (Chapters 4-6) 	
Week 3: Eugenics and Racism in the U.S. Mass Incarceration System		
M 9.8	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whatcott, Jess. “Introduction.” <i>Menace to the Future: A Disability and Queer History of Carceral Eugenics</i>, Duke University Press, 2024. DOI: https://doi-org.proxy2.cl.msu.edu/10.1215/9781478059745 	
W 9.10	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Michelle Alexander. Chapter 5 “The New Jim Crow.” The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness. Revised Edition. New York: The New Press. 2012. 	
Week 4: Punishment vs “Rehabilitation”		
M 9.15	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larson, Doran. “Introduction” Witness in the Era of Mass Incarceration: Discovering the Ethical Prison. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison WI. 2017. xi-xxxi. 	
W 9.17	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baca, Jimmy Santiago. <i>A Place to Stand</i>. New York: Grove Press, 2002. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chap 1-8 	

Week 5: Memoirs of Incarcerated Writers

M 9.22	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Baca, Jimmy Santiago. <i>A Place to Stand</i>. New York: Grove Press, 2002.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chap 9-Epilogue● Short, In-Class Writing #1: Passage Analysis Select a short passage from Baca or Peltier. Write a 2-page essay analyzing how rhetorical features (“Common” or “Prison” or a combination; voice, audience, purpose, constraint) shape meaning. Purpose: Train close-reading and rhetorical analysis skills.	
W 9.24	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Peltier, Leonard. United States Prisoner #89637-132. <i>Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance</i>. Ed. Harvey Arden. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin: 1999.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chap. 1-24● Short, In-Class Writing #1: Passage Analysis Select a short passage from Baca or Peltier. Write a 2-page essay analyzing how rhetorical features (“Common” or “Prison” or a combination; voice, audience, purpose, constraint) shape meaning. Purpose: Train close-reading and rhetorical analysis skills.	

Week 6: Memoirs of Incarcerated Writers

M 9.29	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Peltier, Leonard. United States Prisoner #89637-132. <i>Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance</i>. Ed. Harvey Arden. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin: 1999.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Chap. 25-End	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short, In-Class Writing #1: Passage Analysis Select a short passage from Baca or Peltier. Write a 2-page essay analyzing how rhetorical features (“Common” or “Prison” or a combination; voice, audience, purpose, constraint) shape meaning. Purpose: Train close-reading and rhetorical analysis skills. 	
W 10.1	<p>Readings</p> <p>Found In:</p> <p>Larson, Doran, Ed. The Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whitfield, A. “It Could Be Me.” (60) ● Piwowar, Robert F. “A Lesson in Language.” ● Gann, Martin G. “One Small Voice Through the Wall.” ● Jacobs, B. G. “Food for Thought.” ● Whetzel, Stephen. “A Renaissance.” ● Short In-Class Writing #2: Genre Transformation with Reflection In 1-2 pages, reimagine and rewrite a prison text in a new genre (poem → op-ed, letter → speech, policy Memoir → poem, Witness Narrative → policy, public writing → narrative). Write an additional 1-2 page reflection on what rhetorical changes occur. Purpose: Show how audience and genre (among others) shape rhetorical force and effect. 	Short, In-Class Writing #1
Week 7: Stories of Incarcerated Women & Prison Experience		
M 10.6	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sudbury, Julia. “Unpacking the Crisis: Women of Color, Globalization, and the Prison-Industrial Complex.” Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 	

- San Francisco Children of Incarcerated Parents Partnership. “Children of Incarcerated Parents: A Bill of Rights.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- Lee, Arlene F. et. al. “The Impact of the Adoption and Safe Families Act on Children of Incarcerated Parents.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention. “King County (WA) Gender Identity Regulations.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- RIPPD. “Rights for Imprisoned People with Psychiatric Disabilities.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- Residents of the Cook County Juvenile Detention Center. “Bill of Health Rights for Incarcerated Girls.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- “Testimony of Kemba Smith before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.
- All of Us or None. “Employment Resolution: Human Rights Commission of the City and County of San Francisco.” [*Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*](#). Eds. Rickie

	<p>Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short In-Class Writing #2: Genre Transformation with Reflection In 1-2 pages, reimagine and rewrite a prison text in a new genre (poem → op-ed, letter → speech, declaration or policy, memoir → poem, Witness Narrative → declaration or policy, public writing → narrative). Write an additional 1-2 page reflection on what rhetorical changes occur and their effects on meaning. Purpose: Show how audience and genre (among others) shape rhetorical force and effect. 	
W 10.8	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Whitlock, Kay. “The Long Shadow of Prison: My Messy Journey through Fear, Silence, and Racism toward Abolition.” <i>Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States</i>. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 28-34 ● Warner, Kebby. “Pregnancy, Motherhood, and Loss in Prison.” <i>Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States</i>. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 89-93 ● Leslie, Elizabeth. “Who Said Women Can’t Get Along?” <i>Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States</i>. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 121-124 ● Short In-Class Writing #2: Genre Transformation with Reflection In 1-2 pages, reimagine and rewrite a prison text in a new genre (poem → op-ed, letter → speech, declaration or policy, memoir → poem, Witness Narrative → declaration or policy, public writing → narrative). Write an additional 1-2 page 	Student Nominations for Readings by Incarcerated or Formerly Incarcerated Authors

	<p>reflection on what rhetorical changes occur and their effects on meaning. Purpose: Show how audience and genre (among others) shape rhetorical force and effect.</p>	
<p>Week 8: Stories of Incarcerated Women, cont'd.</p>		
<p>M 10.13</p>	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stoller, Nancy. "The Death of Luisa Montalvo." <i>Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States</i>. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 246-251 ● Stout, Amy. "Getting Free." <i>Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States</i>. Eds. Rickie Solinger, et. al. Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2010. 145-149. ● Reeves, Markeithia R. "Inmate Jane Doe." Larson, Doran, Ed. <i>The Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America</i>. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013. ● Short In-Class Writing #2: Genre Transformation with Reflection In 1-2 pages, reimagine and rewrite a prison text in a new genre (poem → op-ed, letter → speech, declaration or policy, memoir → poem, Witness Narrative → declaration or policy, public writing → narrative). Write an additional 1-2 page reflection on what rhetorical changes occur and their effects on meaning. Purpose: Show how audience and genre (among others) shape rhetorical force and effect. 	<p>Student Nominated Readings Made Available</p>
<p>W 10.15</p>	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kathy Boudin. "The Resilience of the Written Off: Women in Prison as Women of Change." <i>Women's</i> 	<p>Short, In-Class Writing #2</p>

	<p><i>Rights Law Reporter</i>, Volume 29, Number 1, Fall 2007.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angew, Lynne. "Sabrina." May 10, 2011. PEN America. • Brit Bennett. Chapter One. The Mothers. New York: Riverhead Books, 2016. 	
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Week 9: Voices Across Walls

<p>M 10.20 No Class Meeting</p>	<p>Readings</p> <p>No Class Meeting Fall Break</p>	
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<p>W 10.22</p>	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kathy Boudin. "The Resilience of the Written Off: Women in Prison as Women of Change." <i>Women's Rights Law Reporter</i>, Volume 29, Number 1, Fall 2007. • Angew, Lynne. "Sabrina." May 10, 2011. PEN America. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brit Bennett. Chapter One. The Mothers. New York: Riverhead Books, 2016. ● Short, In-Class Writing #3: Rhetorical Dialogue Pair an incarcerated writer’s work with a reform/abolition theorist or scholarly work. Write a 2–3 page essay staging a rhetorical dialogue. Look for similar topics discussed in the articles. Describe how those topics are framed and how positionality of the authors affect the topic’s presentation. Explain the points of resonance or agreement. Where are there tensions or disagreement? Purpose: Situate firsthand accounts within larger justice movements. <p>Link: SpeakOut! Program at CSU (you’ll see a series of publications on incarcerated people’s creative writing/composing.</p> <p>Link: Alabama Prison Arts+Ed Program –Auburn University</p>	
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Week 10: TBD by Student Selections

<p>M 10.27</p>	<p>Readings: (No Student Readings for this week= 13th (2016) Let’s attend to when, where, and why people mention or draw attention to the role of rhetoric in relation to sociological, economic or political aspects of mass incarceration.</p> <p>Student-Selected Readings</p> <p>The intention is to make space for students to select a reading (assigning us 10 pages maximum) is to have folks pick something related to mass incarceration adding a new or more focused perspective related to our reading, and (ideally) speaking to them personally. Here are few areas to consider pulling texts from: other analyses of the systemic nature of mass incarceration (i.e. magazine articles, website publications, scholarly texts, et cetera); mass incarceration’s effects on society and individuals; theoretical analyses of</p>	
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	<p>power, sovereignty, "criminality"; memoirs, poetry, fiction by incarcerated folks or formerly incarcerated people; studies of rehabilitative programs for the incarcerated or those rebuilding their lives after incarceration's effects. In the Additional Readings document linked below, I've offered possible texts folks could select from if they so choose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Short, In-Class Writing #3: Rhetorical Dialogue Pair an incarcerated writer's work with a reform/abolition theorist or scholarly work. Write a 2–3 page essay staging a rhetorical dialogue. Look for similar topics discussed in the articles. Describe how those topics are framed and how positionality of the authors affect the topic's presentation. Explain the points of resonance or agreement. Where are there tensions or disagreement? Purpose: Situate firsthand accounts within larger justice movements. 	
W 10.29	<p>Readings: Larson, Doran, Ed. The Fourth City: Essays from the Prison in America. East Lansing MI: Michigan State University Press, 2013.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Beverley, Michael B. "A Perspective On Prison." ● Mac, Shelley. "Beginnings." ● Hartman, Kenneth E. "The Trouble with Prison Reformers." ● Reed. Karter Kane. "Life on the Inside." ● Short, In-Class Writing #3: Rhetorical Dialogue Pair an incarcerated writer's work with a reform/abolition theorist or scholarly work. Write a 2–3 page essay staging a rhetorical dialogue. Look for similar topics discussed in the articles. Describe how those topics are framed and how positionality of the authors affect the topic's presentation. Explain the points of resonance or agreement. Where are there tensions or disagreement? Purpose: Situate firsthand accounts within larger justice movements. 	

Week 11: TBD by Student Selections

M 11.3	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide.)● Short, In-Class Writing #3: Rhetorical Dialogue Pair an incarcerated writer’s work with a reform/abolition theorist or scholarly work. Write a 2–3 page essay staging a rhetorical dialogue. Look for similar topics discussed in the articles. Describe how those topics are framed and how positionality of the authors affect the topic’s presentation. Explain the points of resonance or agreement. Where are there tensions or disagreement? Purpose: Situate firsthand accounts within larger justice movements.	Leading Discussion Student 1 Student 2
W 11.5	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide for possible approaches to crafting questions.)● Short, In-Class Writing #3: Rhetorical Dialogue Pair an incarcerated writer’s work with a reform/abolition theorist or scholarly work. Write a 2–3 page essay staging a rhetorical dialogue. Look for similar topics discussed in the articles. Describe how those topics are framed and how positionality of the authors affect the topic’s presentation. Explain the points of resonance or agreement. Where are there tensions or disagreement? Purpose: Situate firsthand accounts within larger justice movements.	Student 3’s: -#1 -#2 -#3 Student 4

Week 12: TBD by Student Selections

M 11.10	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide for possible approaches to crafting questions.)● Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability.	<p>Short, In-Class Writing #3</p>
W 11.12	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide for possible approaches to crafting questions.)● Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general	<p>Student 5</p> <p>Student 6</p>

	public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability.	
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Week 13: Prison Education — Advocacy in Action

M 11.17	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide for possible approaches to crafting questions.) • Malakki (Ralph Bolden). “An Open Letter to Prison Educators.” in Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison: Students and Instructors on Pedagogy Behind the Wall. Ed. Rebecca Ginsburg. New York: Routledge. 2019. • Russell X. “Hope for Leaving a Legacy.” in Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison: Students and Instructors on Pedagogy Behind the Wall. Ed. Rebecca Ginsburg. New York: Routledge. 2019. • Dennis R. Simpson II. “Pedagogy of the Offender.” in Critical Perspectives on Teaching in Prison: Students and Instructors on Pedagogy Behind the Wall. Ed. Rebecca Ginsburg. New York: Routledge. 2019. • Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general 	<p>Student 7</p> <p>https://prisonjournalismproject.org/2025/07/17/i-wrote-a-feel-good-story-about-my-prison-then-came-the-backlash/</p> <p>Student 8</p> <p>Leading Discussion</p>
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	public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability.	
W 11.19	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student-Selected Readings & Leading Discussion: (select a reading for us to consider and present your analysis of its rhetoric, and offer rhetorical or social justice-related questions for us to consider and discuss.) (See Discussion Question Guide for possible approaches to crafting questions.) • Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability. 	<p>Student 9</p> <p>Student 10</p> <p>https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/18/politics/cj-rice-freed</p>

Week 14: Prison Writing Programs at Work

M 11.24	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plemons, Anna. “Literacy as an Act of Creative Resistance: Joining the Work of Incarcerated Teaching Artists at a Maximum-Security Prison.” <i>Community Literacy Journal</i>, vol. 7, no. 2, 2013, pp. 39–52. https://doi.org/10.1353/clj.2013.0008, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/515384 • Wendy Wolters Hinshaw. “Writing to Listen: Why I Write Across Prison Wall.” <i>Community Literacy Journal</i>, Fall 2018, Vol. 13 Issue 1, p55-70, 16p. https://ezproxy.msu.edu/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=eue&AN=134122863&site=ehost-live&scope=site 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Larry Barrett, Pablo Mendoza, Logan Middleton, Mario Rubio, & Thomas Stromblad. “More than Transformative: A New View of Prison Writing Narratives.” <i>Reflections</i>. Volume 19.1, Spring/Summer 2019. https://ezproxy.msu.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/more-than-transformative-new-view-prison-writing/docview/2454728521/se-2?accountid=12598 ● Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability. 	
W 11.26	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Butler, Judith. “Preface.” <i>Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence</i>. London: Verso. 2004. Xi-xxi. (PDF Found in “Readings and Resources” Module.) ● Foucault, Michel. <i>Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison</i>. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Part Four, Prison. “The Carceral” Vintage Books, New York: 1979. 293-308. ● Short, In-Class Writing #4: Audience Reframing Exercise. Find an advocacy article, a poem critical of mass incarceration, a resistance or survival narrative, or a critical academic article, or a Student-Selected Reading and turn it into an infographic for a non-academic or governmental audience. Write an additional 1-2 page analysis of how its impact shifts across audiences (family, policymakers, general public). Purpose: Strengthen audience awareness and adaptability. 	

Week 15: In-Class Publishing		
M 12.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-Class Construction of Manifesto 	Short, In-Class Writing #4
W 12.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In-Class Construction of Manifesto 	
Week 16: Finals Week		
M 12.8, 3-5pm	<p>Writings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final Exam: Available on D2L from 3-5pm 	<p>Due Reflection</p> <p>Final Exam</p>

Additional Helpful Resources

- [Essay Fundamentals Guide](#)
- [Class Discussion/Question Generation Guide](#)
- [Additional Readings](#), not included in syllabus (unless you choose them!)