

Sociology 155 Criminology
Gated Communities for the Poor:
The Prison Industrial Complex: Principles, Processes, Products

M.T.W 8:00-12:40, Winter
2 January-17 January 2007
250 Amador

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Imprisonment has become the response of first resort to far too many of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty. These problems often are veiled by being conveniently grouped together under the category “crime” and by the automatic attribution of criminal behavior to people of color. Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages.

Angela Davis, 1998

At various times in history, prisoners have been thought of as sinners, deviants, or members of an oppressed class. As we approach the twenty-first century, they have now become mere commodities in the eyes of global entrepreneurs.

Marc Mauer, 1999

This course in criminology will examine a series of perspectives on crime and crime control; in particular we will deeply examine one concept for understanding the modern U.S. criminal justice system: the prison industrial complex. This approach is intended to offer a framework for understanding the wide array of political, historical, and theoretical issues that are at play in the U.S. today. The course will ask students to examine the criminal justice system with a critical eye: questioning assumptions and thinking creatively about solutions. Students will be evaluated based on several short paper assignments and written lecture responses.

There are three required texts, available at the Hornet Bookstore, and one required reader, which is entirely online at the course website on webCT or at:

<http://www.csus.edu/soc/kwehr/teach/soc155/soc155.htm>. A copy of the texts will also be on reserve at University Library. **Students are expected to keep up on the readings and come to lecture**, where we will discuss the readings. Students will be assessed based on weekly in-class exams. Grading aside, the emphasis of the course is on ideas.

I am available outside of the office hours above—email me to set up an appointment. ***Please use my office hours!*** The more that people come to raise issues and to ask clarifying questions, the better I can improve the quality of the course. ***Your best bet for a quick response is to email me.*** I check this regularly (usually several times a day).

Required Texts:

- *Online course reader.*
- *The Perpetual Prisoner Machine.* Joel Dyer
- *Malign Neglect.* Michael Tonry
- *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Angela Davis
- *Lockdown America.* Christian Parenti (recommended)
- *Tabloid Justice.* Fox and Van Sickel (recommended)

Each day we will discuss the readings and related ideas. Attendance is mandatory, doing the reading is required, and participation is expected.

I. introduction and background, and structure of the cjs

01.02 **police, court**

Tonry *Malign Neglect* (Parenti *Lockdown America*)

01.03 **court, prison, death**

Tonry *Malign Neglect*

II. criminological theories

01.08 **rational choice, social learning, social control, social disorganization theories**
online reader “akers1”

01.09 **consensus, conflict, feminist theories**

online reader “akers2”

01.10 **private prisons, economics, and rationality**

online reader “private_prisons”

III. the prison industrial complex

01.15 **corporate crime vs street crime**

Dyer *Perpetual Prisoner Machine*

01.16 **money, politics, media**

Dyer *Perpetual Prisoner Machine* (Fox and Van Sickel *Tabloid Justice*)

01.17 **conclusion and alternatives**

Davis *Are Prisons Obsolete?*

Catalog description

The social dimensions—causes and consequences—of adult crime and deviant behavior in American society. There will be some international comparisons. Police, courts, and prison are examined. We will pay special attention to current issues in crime and deviance. (This is a General Education course in area D2.)

Learning objectives

1. To understand social and spatial variations in crime patterns. 2. To explore the impact and effect of diversity (race, class, gender) on the criminal justice system. 3. To become familiar with crime causation theories. 4. To explore international comparisons in criminal behavior patterns. 5. To become familiar with some of the major social issues prominent in the criminal justice system. 6. To evaluate research efforts of women and minority scholars.

Student Assessment

Attendance is mandatory, keeping up on the reading is required, and participation is expected. Students will be assessed at the end of each week with a short exam during classtime.