

Crime and Justice in America
The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program

Course: Seminar 300
Instructors: Jeff Gingerich and Laura Gorgol

Jeff Gingerich's contact information:

Email: jpg722@cabrini.edu
Office: (610) 902-8498

Laura Gorgol's contact information:

Email: leg722@cabrini.edu
Office: (610) 902-8225

Mission

The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program is an opportunity for a small group of students from Cabrini College and residents of the Montgomery County Correctional Facility to come together as a class to study the American criminal justice system. We will share common readings and discuss our ideas and perceptions about issues of crime and justice, the criminal justice system, corrections and imprisonment. Through dialogue we will bring together our theoretical knowledge and our lived, practical experience to gain a deeper understanding of the criminal justice system.

Objectives

- To create an environment that will facilitate the honest exchange of ideas through dialogue.
- To help students develop their abilities to voice their experiences and understandings about various criminal justice and correctional issues.
- To provide a setting for students to test and hone their theoretical understandings about these issues.
- To develop students' abilities to analyze their own perceptions of and perspectives on these issues.
- To allow students to place their own perceptions and understandings of criminal justice issues into a wider context.
- To assist students in developing their capacities for written self expression.
- To create a connection between those on the outside and those on the inside.

Format of Class Meetings

The group will meet every Monday throughout the semester from 2:30-4:30. Most weeks, the class will meet at the Montgomery County Correctional Facility. The classes will consist of a guided dialogue, in both the large group and small subgroups, on particular topics each week.

On the first, third and final weeks, the inside and outside students will meet separately to allow participants to brief and debrief the process at the beginning and the end of the semester.

Attendance and Participation

Because this class is based on dialogue, it is imperative that each student attend and fully participate in every session. Any absence will change the dynamics of the group, as well as disappoint those who are participating in the program.

Active participation is key to the success of the course. As a group, we will be discussing all sorts of issues, some of which will be controversial. We are all – everyone involved – challenged to say what we think, even if it is not a popular point of view. This can be difficult and make us feel uncomfortable. However we must take responsibility for the direction and the depth of the discussion. We will all have to work to get comfortable enough to take the risks that are necessary for full participation.

An important part of creating a space where we can feel comfortable speaking our mind is for us to actively and respectfully listen to each other, even when we disagree. Let people speak their mind. You are welcome to respond – in fact, you are expected to respond – when you disagree. But do it after the person has finished their thought.

Outside Students: If there are SERIOUS and VERIFIABLE reasons that you cannot attend a class session, you MUST CONTACT US IN ADVANCE. Because of the transportation and check-in process, if we do not know where you are, it will hold up the rest of the group. Similarly, you must be on time. If you are late, you may miss your ride or miss check-in at the gate.

Inside Students: If there are reasons that you cannot attend, please try to arrange for someone in the class to let us know that you will not be there. We cannot count on the administration to let us know why you are not there.

If the school is closed because of the weather, class will not meet.

Papers

After each combined class session, you will write a reflection paper (guidelines will be provided in a separate handout) based on that class. The papers will allow/require you to integrate your experiences with the ideas expressed in the readings. The papers will be due the following week. You may skip up to three papers during the semester or do all for extra credit.

At the end of the semester, everyone will write a final paper (guidelines will be provided in a separate handout) that will reflect on the entire semester. This paper will be due on the final class session.

Required Readings

The following books are required reading for the course. Outside students may purchase these books at the Cabrini College Book Store. Books will be provided to the inside students through the Educational Programming Board at Cabrini College.

Newjack: Guarding Sing-Sing by Ted Conover, Random House: 2000.

Transcending: Reflections of Crime Victims by Howard Zehr, Good Books: 2001. (make sure to get the paperback)

Crime and Punishment in America by Elliot Currie, Henry Holt and Company: 1998.

The Little Book of Restorative Justice of People in Prison by Barb Toews, Good Books: 2006.

Code of the Street by Elijah Anderson, W.W. Norton: 1999.

The schedule for the readings is attached. Readings are to be completed before class on the date that they are listed.

Grading Policy

Given the interactive nature of this course, one third of the grade will be based on attendance and full participation. Participation involves attentive listening as well as actively participating in the conversation, in both large and small groups. One third of the grade will be based on the reflection papers. The final third will be based on the final paper.

Class Schedule

Jan. 22	Introductions/ Overview/ Paperwork Separate Classes for Inside and Outside students
Jan. 29	Introductions/ Group Process Anderson – Code of the Streets, Introduction
Feb. 5	Briefing/Debriefing Separate Classes for Inside and Outside students Due: Paper #1
Feb. 12	What Are Prisons For? Readings: Currie, Chapters 1 & 2
Feb. 19	Why Do People Commit Crime? Anderson – Code of the Streets, chapters 2 and 3 Due: Paper #2
Feb. 26	Spring Break – No Class

- Mar. 5 The Criminal Justice System
 Outside students meet one hour early – class will be preceded by a tour of the
 Montgomery County Prison
 Currie, Chapters 3-5
 Due: Paper #3
- Mar. 12 Myths and Realities of Prison Life
 Readings: Conover – Newjack, ch. 1-3
 Due: Paper #4
- Mar. 19 Punishment and Rehabilitation
 Readings: Conover – Newjack, ch. 4, 6-7
 Due: Paper #5
- Mar. 26 Victims and Victimization
 Read: Zehr, *Transcending*
 Due: Paper #6
- Apr. 2 Restorative Justice
 Toews, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*
 Visiting facilitator: Barb Toews, author of the Little Book
 Due: Paper #7
- Apr. 9 Easter Break – No Class**
- Apr. 16 Group Project
 Reading: TBA
 Due: Paper #8
- Apr. 23 Group Project
 Reading: TBA
 Due: Paper #9
- Apr. 30 Group Project
 Reading: TBA
 Due: Paper #10
- May 7 Closing Ceremony
- May 14 Debriefing
 Separate Classes for Inside and Outside students
 Final Papers Due

Tip 4: Use quotations from the readings and examples from class discussion to support your analysis or to highlight the limitations of your analysis.

Example:

The War on Drugs has contributed to an increase in the number of men and women in prison. During the last decade, tougher drug laws have been introduced in most states. These laws often have a greater impact on men than women. As Dr. Jones states in *Her Really Good Book*, “**women are likely to receive harsher penalties than men for their involvement in similar offenses**” (HRGB p. 3). This trend is likely to continue for the next decade, and its impact will extend beyond the lives of incarcerated women. As Prof. Pompa writes, “**incarceration also punishes the families of men and women on the inside**” (PPB p.7). Lawmakers should consider how these laws affect those who are incarcerated and their loved ones.

Tip: Try **not** to do the following:

Quote #1: “Women are likely to receive harsher penalties than men for their involvement in similar offenses” (HRGB p.3). This quote shows that women in the criminal justice system are treated differently from men. It seems that women and men are treated differently at PICC (the county jail).

This is not necessarily “wrong,” but notice whose voice and opinion is emphasized when the quote comes first: not yours. Use this assignment to showcase YOUR analysis. You’ve done the work, read the books, and listened in class. Now give YOUR analysis of all this. **Make sure you can back your analysis up with something.** Use the quotations and examples to support YOUR analysis or to highlight the limitations of your analysis.

Section Three: Reactions

In this section, you should write about your emotional reaction (how you felt) after class. Try to describe *in as much detail as possible* how the class made you feel. For example, don’t just say that class made you feel sad. Tell the reader what made you feel sad, how long were you sad, what does sadness feel like, did others notice, when did it stop, etc. It may be difficult for some of us to explore these feelings. Writing can be a useful way to examine feelings that we might otherwise ignore. Remember, you will not be penalized for honesty.

Final Tip: Value the time you spend on each assignment.

RULES OF THE INSTITUTION

Things to Bring In:

- **Photo ID.** For example, some institutions will want a valid driver's license, passport, or state ID, while others will require the students' school ID cards. Some institutions will take either one.
- **Students may bring in a notebook, textbooks, and a pen** for class, provided that doing so has been cleared with the institutional liaison ahead of time.

Things NOT to Bring In:

- **Weapons.** (Not on prison property, not even in your car, not even with a permit.)
- **Illegal drugs.** (They're *illegal*. By the way, some prisons use ion scanners on outsiders as they enter to determine if they have handled drugs. Some institutions use dogs to determine if there are cars in the parking lot that contain drugs.)
- **Medications of any kind.** (If you or a student has a need to have some kind of medication on hand, like an inhaler for asthma, you will need to get clearance ahead of time, or it will not be allowed inside.)
- **Alcohol.**
- **Cigarettes or any other tobacco products.** (An increasing number of institutions are smoke-free, and cigarettes are considered serious contraband.)
- **Maps.** (If you do keep maps in your car – you may need one to get to the prison, for example – make sure they are locked in the glove compartment or in the trunk.)
- **Chewing gum.**
- **Cell phones, beepers, or car alarm remotes.**
- **Wallets, pocketbooks, or money.**
- **Umbrellas.**
- **Food or drink, which includes hard candy.**
- **Make-up, lip balm, hand lotion, aspirin, Advil, cough drops, etc.**

How to Dress:

- **No clothing that resembles the uniforms worn by either staff or those who are imprisoned in the institution.** It is best to check out in advance whether blue denim, orange, brown, black, olive green, neon green or khaki may be worn (uniform colors vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction).
- **Anything that reveals skin inappropriately** (i.e., tummies, legs above knee, cleavage, upper arms, and shoulders). Most institutions do not allow shorts on men or women.
- Given that, in many institutions, it is necessary to climb stairs, we have set the rule that **women cannot wear dresses or skirts.** It is also helpful, since the length of skirts varies widely. If long skirts are worn, they cannot be wraparounds or garments that button all the way down to the hem.
- **Nothing excessively tight or low cut.** We instruct students to dress casually, but appropriately, with loose-fitting pants and tops, recognizing that “loose-fitting” is a relative term.
- **No jewelry, including body piercing, such as nose rings, tongue rings, etc.** A piercing that does not show (e.g., navel) is usually not problematic. Wedding rings are a frequent exception to the “no jewelry” rule, as are religious medals, which are not supposed to be banned by institutions.
- **No watches,** except for the instructor.
- **No under-wire bras,** when there is a metal detector involved (there usually is).
- **No hooded sweatshirts** (aka “hoodies”), **white tee-shirts, bandanas, colored shoelaces, caps.** Some of these items are considered related to gang activity.
- **No coats or other outerwear.**
- **No open-toed shoes or sandals.**

Behavior on the Inside:

- **No outside student may bring anything in to give to an inside student,** no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, including such things as articles, pens, paper, and the like (not to mention books – institutions have strict policies about the process by which books are brought inside).
- **No inside student may give anything to an outside student.** A frequent exception to this is hard candy, which is one of the few “luxuries” inside students have, which they may want to share during the class.
- **Inside students may not ask outside students to bring in anything for them** – or to contact anyone for them. There is no mailing of letters or making phone calls on an inside student’s

behalf.

- **There can be no contact between inside and outside students beyond the classroom, including after the course is over. This restriction includes letters, telephone calls, and visiting. This regulation is fundamental – and must be understood by everyone involved in the program.**
- **There can be no displays of physical affection between inside and outside students.** Warm handshakes, sometimes with an arm grasp, are acceptable. Hugging is not. This is important to clarify, especially since, as people get to know each other, it feels natural to give each other a warm embrace. Although this is not enforced the same way everywhere, a hug can get you banned from prison. The inside students are aware of this rule and generally observe it, but sometimes – in the moment – it might be hard to remember.
- **No personal information may be exchanged, such as address, telephone number, prison number, or other contact information.**

RULES OF INSIDE OUT

- **Remember that we are not there to study the inside students,** to “help” the inside students, to find out why the inside students are incarcerated, or for either the inside group of students or the outside group of students to “teach” the other group. We are simply there to explore issues together.
- **Students must behave appropriately during class,** remembering that it is a college class and that it is being held inside a prison. Not only is there no hugging or other physical contact with or between the inside and outside students, but there can also be no flirtation, inappropriate body language, etc.
- **There is no loaning of pens or pencils, no bringing anything in for someone on the inside, even something as trivial as a newspaper article. Everything of this nature must be handled by the instructor.**
- **There must to be no passing of notes between any students.**
- **Notebooks can be labeled with first names only and no other identifying information, and papers submitted are to be marked with first names only.**
- **Confidentiality: what is shared in the classroom stays there.** Not only can it not be shared with anyone outside of class in a way that could identify the speaker, but it must not be a topic of further discussion among students who are enrolled in the class.

Semi-Anonymity:

What Inside-Out means by semi-anonymity is the use of **first names only** and **no last names allowed** in the prison classroom (except for the instructor). Students may find this policy dehumanizing and ironic in light of Inside-Out’s emphasis on humanizing issues and including all voices. However, it is essential that this policy be followed. The basic reasons for the policy are as follows:

- **It makes it much harder for students to try to keep in touch with one another** during or after the semester, which is a serious violation of the rules of the program and, probably, of most prisons.
- **It protects the inside students.** Though we make it clear from the beginning that it is neither required nor advisable, inside students often do talk about their cases. Doing so can cause legal problems for them, particularly if they have an open case of any kind. Using first names only removes the threat that other students will be subpoenaed to testify in a classmate's case. And it preserves inside students' privacy so that their past or present legal situations cannot be researched by outside students who may be curious about why they're in prison.
- **It protects the outside students.** It is in the realm of possibility that an inside student or someone they know could present problems in the life of one of the outside students. This is not to cast aspersions on inside students; the point is, it only takes one instance for someone to be seriously harmed or for the program to be shut down. Statistically, the more people who participate in Inside-Out, the more likely it is that someone with problematic inclinations will be in a class. Since we have no way of knowing who that will be, the rule protects everyone, all the time.
- **Some students, inside and out, are uncomfortable sharing their last names.** A policy prohibiting all students from sharing last names makes the decision of whether or not to share this information a lot less difficult for individuals.
- It teaches the lesson that it is not necessary to know things **about** people in order to come to know them in a different way and learn with and from them.

Note: Portions of this syllabus have been adapted from the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program Curriculum and Training Guide, Lori Pompa and Melissa Crabbe, co-authors.