



**Prison Literature**  
**English 345**  
**Spring 2014**  
**Prof. Lockard**  
**1:30-2:45PM MW**  
**148 LL**

## **SYLLABUS**

Prison literature constitutes an immense and too-little read body of US and world literature. This is the literature that emerges from, records, or imaginatively engages the experience of incarceration irrespective of reason.

In the western tradition, prison literature originated as a small body of writing by elites and bore a heavy religious imprint. It has expanded enormously into a democratic and mass-produced global literature that incorporates narratives, novels, poetry, and political documents adopting radically differing social perspectives. A lengthy list of major prison writers from world literature would include Feodor Dostoevsky, Liu Xiobo, Aung San Suu Kyi, Nelson Mandela, Andrei Sakharov, Wole Soyinka, and many more.

This course employs a selection of US and world literature to trace prison literature as an integral feature of literary and rhetorical history; as a vehicle for civil disobedience; as exposition of socially concealed worlds; as a site of gender and sexual consciousness; as resistant political autobiography and demand for expressive autonomy; and as a feature of everyday life in the US Southwest. We will conclude the course with a collaborative practicum in which students will critique writing from currently-serving inmates in Arizona and New Mexico.

The central goal of this course is to make visible an invisible literature.

English majors (Literature): fulfills post-1900 requirement.

## Texts

### USA: The Nation's Prisoners

Ethan Allen, *A Narrative of Ethan Allen's Captivity* (1779)

Phillip Freneau, 'The British Prison-Ship' (1781)

[see <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/makingrev/war/text6/freneaubritishprisonship.pdf>]

John McCain, *Faith of My Fathers* (2005)

### USA: Civil Disobedience and Prison

Henry David Thoreau, "Civil Disobedience" (1849)

Martin Luther King, "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (1963)

### World: Prisons, Gender and Sexuality

UK: Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis* and 'Ballad of Reading Gaol' (1897-98)

UK: Constance Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners: Some Personal Experiences* (1914)

### USA and World: Imprisoned Dissidents

USA: Eugene V. Debs, *Walls & Bars* (1927)

Russia: Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovitch* (1962)

Argentina: Jacobo Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name, Cell without a Number* (1981)

Argentina: Alicia Partnoy, *The Little School* (1986)

### USA: Prison Novels

USA: James Baldwin, *If Beale Street Could Talk* (1974)

USA: John Cheever, *Falconer* (1975)

### Southwest USA: Prison Literature

Arizona: Ken Lamberton, *Time of Grace* (2007)

Arizona/New Mexico: Jimmy Santiago Baca, *A Place to Stand* (2001)

## Coursework

- **Paper-writing** (50 percent). **Four 4-page** (double-spaced) papers and **two 2-3 page (single spaced) critical responses**. Papers will be due by midnight Sunday; critical responses will be due as scheduled. In the final class unit students will write two critical responses to inmate writing. These responses will be returned to the inmates.
- **Final exam** (40 percent). A final exam will cover all course materials. The final exam is on Monday, May 5, 12:10-2pm.
- **Presentations** (10 percent). Students will present texts throughout this semester. These

presentations should discuss the text and its social context. The presentations will be 15-20 minutes per class and should be well prepared.

- \* **Advice:** Do not let the reading and writing wait or pile up. In this course, consistent daily work is more likely to be successful than irregular bursts of work.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is required throughout the course. Two absences without prior excuse will result in the lowering of a student's final course grade by one letter. Four absences will result in failure. Attendance sign-in will be taken at all classes.

### **Reading**

A complete knowledge of the day's assigned reading is required. This course is predicated on give-and-take discussion, and without a reading knowledge of the text it is difficult or impossible to participate meaningfully in class discussions. This is more than a standard syllabus clause; it is a matter of respect towards the class discussion.

### **Grades**

Grades are an archaic form of evaluation, and better forms of evaluation can be employed. However, your instructor appreciates having a university salary and this course gives honest grades – as untenable a concept as this may ultimately be – using clear criteria. Those criteria appear in every assignment.

You have the right to query or challenge any grade given during this course, *without concern for making the request*. Write a note explaining why you believe a better grade is merited, attach it to your paper, and hand it to me after class. Upon receiving a grade query, I will either raise or confirm the grade. A good number of grade queries accompanied by a substantive reason do receive a positive response. Please remember that a grade constitutes an evaluation of the work, not of the person.

Occasionally, at my discretion, I may decline to grade work and return it to a student if the grade would be a failure. In this event, the student will be requested to re-submit an improved version of the work within a specified brief period. This policy is in place because I prefer not to give failing grades.

I am a liberal grader and those who complete the coursework can usually expect at least a B-range grade. If the coursework is incomplete (e.g. missing papers), then the course grade will be failing. *Important: all work must be completed and accomplished timely for a passing grade.* No extensions or incompletes will be given.

How does a good paper read? A successful paper should begin with a well-framed argument based on an abstract concept. It will elaborate that initial conceptual argument through the length of the paper, without meandering, and employ sufficient evidence from the text under discussion. Further instructions will be provided together with the first paper assignment, and anonymized examples of more successful papers will be made available with student consent. Paper grades will include

plus/minus grades. *This is not a writing course, so paper comments will be summary. If you wish to have more detailed comment on your paper, contact me.*

## **Honors**

I will give section 18s to Barrett Honors College students. Please talk with me after class early in the course.

## **Writing**

Your writing is a crucial element of your success in this course. I will be available in office hours to discuss paper ideas, and to read and comment on paper drafts. For in-depth editorial work on your writing, visit the Writing Center at LL340 or call them for a tutorial appointment at (480) 965-4272.

High rates of plagiarism have been noticed in English literature courses. Plagiarism violates the ASU Student Code of Conduct, available online at: <http://www.asu.edu/aad/manuals/sta/sta104-01.html>. Plagiarism will be regarded with utmost seriousness and university procedures will be followed to resolve such problems.

## **Technologies**

This course will use a myASU Blackboard course site, accessible via <https://myasucourses.asu.edu>. This site contains course materials, and will be where students do their open journaling and drop their papers.

If there are technical issues that create obstacles, please contact the instructor for advice. Responsibility for resolution of technical difficulties, however, resides with the student.

## **Course Communications**

All course announcements will be made both via announcements on the myASU course website and via e-mail to your ASU e-mail account. E-mail will not be sent to non-ASU addresses; if you wish to receive e-mail at a non-ASU account, please set forwarding at your ASU e-mail account.

I am available via e-mail at [Joe.Lockard@asu.edu](mailto:Joe.Lockard@asu.edu) and generally respond quickly, Monday thru Friday. I will not be available on weekends.

## **Accommodations**

If you have a learning variation that makes online assignments difficult, please let the instructor know and I will arrange other methods. If certain instructional styles work better for you than others, please

let me know: e.g., if you need handouts in large print, if certain visual formats are more difficult for you to understand than others, if all printed material needs to be in black and white instead of colors, etc. Such accommodation requests should be made at the beginning of the semester.

This is a child-friendly class. If you have a child-care emergency or arrangements problem that otherwise might prevent you from coming to class, please bring your children to class and we shall be delighted to see them.

### **Detailed Schedule**

- This schedule is subject to adjustments and alterations, which will be announced both in class and online.
- There are 29 MW classes for this course.

**1. Monday, January 13 -- Introduction**

**2. Wednesday, January 15 – The Nation’s Prisoners**

Read & discuss: Allen, *Narrative*; Freneau, ‘Prison Ship’

*Martin Luther King Day, January 20*

**3. Wednesday, January 22**

Read & discuss: McCain, *Faith of My Fathers* (chapters 14-28; chapters 1-13 optional)

*Paper 1 assigned*

**4. Monday, January 27 – Civil Disobedience and Prison**

Read & discuss: Thoreau, ‘Civil Disobedience’

**5. Wednesday, January 29**

Read & discuss: King, ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’

*Paper 1 due Sunday, February 2*

**6. Monday, February 3 – Prisons, Gender and Sexuality**

Read & discuss: Wilde, *De Profundis*

7. Wednesday, February 5

Read & discuss: Wilde

*Paper 2 assigned*

8. Monday, February 10

Read & discuss: Lytton, *Prisons and Prisoners*

9. Wednesday, February 12

Read & discuss: Lytton

*Paper 2 due Sunday, February 16*

10. Monday, February 17 – **Imprisoned Dissidents**

Read & discuss: Debs, *Walls & Bars*

11. Wednesday, February 19

Read & discuss: Debs

12. Monday, February 24

Read & discuss: Solzhenitsyn, *Ivan Denisovitch*

13. Wednesday, February 26

Read & discuss: Solzhenitsyn

*Paper 3 assigned*

14. Monday, March 3

Read & discuss: Timerman, *Prisoner without a Name*

15. Wednesday, March 5

Timerman

*Spring Break – March 9-16*

*Paper 3 due Sunday, March 18*

16. Monday, March 17

Partnoy, *The Little School*

17. Wednesday, March 19 – **Prison Novels**

Read & discuss: Baldwin, *Beale Street*

18. Monday, March 24

Read & discuss: Baldwin

19. Wednesday, March 26

Read & discuss: Cheever, *Falconer*

20. Monday, March 31

Read & discuss: Cheever

*Paper 4 assigned*

21. Wednesday, April 2 – **Southwest Prison Literature**

Read & discuss: Lamberton, *Time of Grace*

22. Monday, April 7

Read & discuss: Lamberton

23. Wednesday, April 9

Read & discuss: Baca, *A Place to Stand*

24. Monday, April 14

Read & discuss: Baca

*Paper 4 due Sunday, April 13*

25. Wednesday, April 16 – **Prison Writing Practicum**

Meet for writing hand-out & discussion

26. Monday, April 21

27. Wednesday, April 23

Critical response 1 due

**28.** Monday, April 28

**29.** Wednesday, April 30

Critical response 2 due

**Final Exam      Monday, May 5, 12:10-2pm**