

# Humanities Action Lab

## Mass Incarceration Project

CulAnth 290S-01, History 390S-05, ICS 390S-05

10:05-11:20 AM Tuesdays and Thursdays  
Link 079, Seminar Room 3

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Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 3-4:30pm, and by appointment

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Tuesdays and Thursdays 1-4 pm and by appointment

**Course Description:** This course explores the theories, politics, and practices of socially engaged public humanities and museology by creating a project on the past, present, and future of incarceration, exploring the explosion of prisons and incarcerated people in the US – including immigration detention centers -- and its global dimensions. We will be working in coordination with other classes at over a dozen other universities, among them Arizona State, Brown, UT Austin, University of Minnesota, and others, each taking on an element of this broad theme. Our course will specifically examine the history of the death penalty and capital punishment as a global issue and create a project gathering histories and experiences of the death penalty in North Carolina. Combining historical and theoretical study with hands-on experience, Duke students will contribute their project to the **Humanities Action Lab: Mass Incarceration Project**, a traveling exhibit, digital platform, oral histories, face-to-face community dialogues, and interactive media. Opening in Spring 2016 at The New School in New York City and traveling to at least a dozen other cities across the country over the next two years, including Durham, this project is an opportunity for students to experiment on innovative ways to open space to generate and exchange unique locally-grounded approaches to common global questions.

We strongly recommend that you follow the Humanities Action Lab's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) feeds. However, this class is TECH FREE (no lap tops, cell phones, iPads, Kindles, etc.) unless we are working on specific computer-related tasks in the class. We also encourage you to explore gathering information via audio and video.

Also, drinks are allowed in class but please **don't bring meals or food** unless you provide enough for everyone.

Some students may be able to travel to New York April 14-16 for a conference to meet others and take part in a great History/Memory Palooza meeting that will mark the opening of the national exhibit. Not everyone will be able to go but this is an option for some interested students. We may also be able to pay for the travel of selected guests, including exonorees.

**Learning outcomes:**

- Give students a “hands-on” experience of creating a professional-quality product
- Introduce students to a rights issue with global and regional importance
- Use an interdisciplinary framework to examine this theme
- Gain an in-depth knowledge of current practices of incarceration and punishment, including the death penalty
- Offer possibilities for developing a focused rights-related research project in the future
- Design ideas/projects from an interdisciplinary perspective
- Learn to work in teams towards a shared goal
- Learn about how to gather, learn and share knowledge through the Internet, including social media
- learn how and when to pay attention (DFW)

## REQUIREMENTS

This course is intended to create a specific, detailed and public project on incarceration, with our role as contributing content on the use of the death penalty in North Carolina. The requirements include:

- **Completing readings and writing assignments on deadline.** We have to gain a lot of knowledge in a very short period of time, so keeping up with assignments and class discussion is critical. This is not a class where you’re required to regurgitate exactly what you’ve learned -- we want you to absorb the knowledge then think about what it means, where it fits and how you can use it to educate others through the vehicle of this project. In other words, real world stuff (yippee!);
- **Attending outside events connected to the class.** We know that you are busy, but these events will greatly enrich your understanding of this issue. Having these speakers and films is one of the great advantages of being a Duke student. **Attendance is required.** We’ve indicated the dates on this syllabus.
- **Being a responsible team member.** You will be working in close coordination with other students and they will be relying on you to complete the tasks you agree to, produce high quality work and be flexible to last-minute changes, other ideas and the demands of a large, national project -- again, real world stuff!
- **Communicating with instructors.** This is a new and challenging class, and we know you’ll have questions, concerns, ideas and moments of panic. TALK TO US -- our office hours are posted above and we are both available via appointment.
- **Submitting your best work.** In a world of spell and grammar check, word processing and the Writing Studio, there is no excuse for typos and grammar mistakes, weirdly formatted work or run-on sentences without that key verb.

We’ll be writing in different ways: source analysis, blog posts, response papers and materials for your final group contribution, to be integrated into the overall project. We are looking for thoughtful, clear and compelling writing that incorporates class readings, discussions, films and speakers, and your own research.

## 1. READING NOTES

Reading notes should be about 300 words long and are due for the week's assignments (Tuesday AND Thursday) by midnight on **MONDAY** of the week the material is assigned. The notes should cover **all** of the week's assignments, including films. Each student may miss one week's reading notes without penalty, but late posts will be registered as a ZERO in your grade. If you must miss a class, don't miss the post!

React to the materials and show us that 1) you've read them, and 2) you have an opinion about them that reflects the themes of this course. Use this as a testing ground for ideas that may enrich your final project. It's helpful to print a copy of your notes and bring them to class for discussion. It's best to do the assignments for the week – and discuss them in your notes – in the order that they appear in the syllabus. Make sure every assignment, including films, is reflected in your notes.

Appearance is important, so please take advantage of spell and grammar-check!

## 2. National Exchange Reflection Blog Posts

Three times during the semester, students will participate in the Global Dialogues on Mass Incarceration on-line platform. The Humanities Action Lab in NYC will provide a series of questions that students at all participating institutions will answer. Your posts are a way to connect with other students working on this project, and share your research in progress. Exceptional posts may be featured on the HAL website. **The deadlines for these posts are Tuesday, September 29th, Tuesday, October 27th, and Tuesday November 24th.** The prompts for these posts are included within the syllabus.

**Post Guidelines:** Style and formatting guidelines for all National Exchange posts Hub staff or researchers will review for accuracy and may ask students to edit any factual errors.

- Length: 300-500 words
- Citations: follow the Chicago Manual of Style
- Footnote all sources and hyperlink within the body of the post to any relevant weblinks
- Image specifications: Provide brief caption (8- 15 words) that includes date or date range of image. Eg: A painting completed by an unknown Haitian refugee during detainment at Guantánamo, 1991. Provide credit for image using following format "Photo courtesy of [repository or individual] and link to where you found it. Example: Photo courtesy of Holly Ackerman. Format: .tiff or jpg
- Byline: include this phrase (in italics) with your own information at the bottom of your post: Posted by [First name] [Last name] – [Degree Status] at [University]

**3. LIVED SPACE ASSIGNMENT:** Please see the assignment on the Resources page. This is due by midnight on October 7.

**4. RESPONSE PAPERS:** Response papers integrate assignments, class discussions, visiting speakers and an outside event into a single argument about an issue we've addressed in class or that you feel is relevant to class themes. As with reading notes, you should use these papers as a way of defining and informing your team project.

It's important that your subject be narrow ("The death penalty is complicated" is not a great topic). **All papers must be double-spaced, in 12 pt Times Roman font with one-inch margins.** Make sure your paper is spell and grammar-checked and that your name appears at the top.

**Response paper 1** should be at least 750 words. The paper must incorporate at least two class assignments and one outside event (speaker or film). The paper is due on the Sakai Dropbox by 5 PM on September 18.

**Response paper 2** is restricted to material we look at after fall break. The paper should be at least 750 words. The paper must incorporate at least two class assignments and one outside event (speaker or film). Response paper 2 is due on Sakai Dropbox by 5 PM on November 13.

## 5. TEAM PROJECT AND PRESENTATION

Instructors will assign teams a specific project to work on during the duration of the course. We will discuss sign-up logistics in class.

As we discussed in class, we will be choosing some ideas or observations in class to frame team projects.

There will be peer evaluation. **The final project is due December 10.**

## GRADING

Grades are recorded on Sakai. We've divided grading into before and after fall break following this rubric:

- 20% attendance and participation
- 10% national exchange blog posts
- 20% weekly reading notes and other forum posts
- 20% response papers
- 30% Group Projects -- your peers will do a peer evaluation to be factored into grades

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

Elder, Robert K. (editor) *Last Words of the Executed*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.

**please get the book -- you can also follow the author on his [web site](#) for updates**

Turow, Scott. *Ultimate Punishment: A Lawyer's Reflections on Dealing with the Death Penalty*. New York: Picador, 2004.

["This is Water,"](#) David Foster Wallace commencement address for Kenyon College (Ohio), 2005.

Unless hyperlinked, all readings are posted under "Resources" on Sakai.

# SCHEDULE

## WEEK 1: Introductions and scope of project

**Tuesday, August 25:** Introduction for students and instructors, syllabus and schedule, logistics, expectations and outcomes

We'll discuss our backgrounds, get to know each other and outline the project. We will also map the assets each of us bring to the table.

EXPLORE: [Humanities Action Lab \(HAL\) web site for Guantánamo Public Memory Project](#) and [HAL web site, "The Challenge in Exhibiting Incarceration"](#)

PLEASE POST by midnight on Wednesday August 26, your first post on why you're taking this class and what interests you about this topic and project.

**Thursday, August 27:** Skype call with Liz Ševčenko (10-15 minutes) at 10:30 am

### ASSIGNMENTS:

[Bryan Stevenson, "We Need to Talk about an Injustice" \(TED Talk\)](#) (March 2012)

## WEEK 2: Archives and the Death Penalty

**Tuesday, September 1:** MEET IN THE RUBENSTEIN RARE BOOK ROOM AT IN PERKINS LIBRARY

We explore the definition of an archive and consider the role archives may play in our project.

Led by Human Rights Archivist Patrick Stawski. Together, we'll register as Rubenstein Library patrons, then have you examine a box on reserve for this course. During class time, please write a post for the Reading Notes forum reflecting on the worksheets you fill out (these will be distributed in class). What is in the collection, how does it relate (or not) to the death penalty and/or incarceration in North Carolina, does it provide you with knowledge that you didn't have before. **This is in addition to your weekly reading notes.**

### ASSIGNMENTS:

["The Incarceration Collections at the Rubenstein: The Role of Reading and Writing in the History of Prisoners' Rights Movements,"](#) Jen Ansley, The Devil's Tale, the blog of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library at Duke University

Browse the [National Death Penalty Archive](#)

Browse the [Death Penalty Information Center web site](#)

Jimerson, Randall, "How Archivists Control the Past" in Terry Cook, editor, *Controlling the past: documenting society and institutions: essays in honor of Helen Willa Samuels* (Chicago : Society of American Archivists, c2011).

**Thursday, September 3: Visit by Joe Neff, Investigative Reporter for the News and Observer, focus on research**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Browse the [North Carolina Coalition for Alternatives to the Death Penalty](#) web site

Browse the [Prison Public Memory Project](#) before class

Alan Gell reporting .pdf in Resources

Seth Kotch and Robert P. Mosteller, "The Racial Justice Act and the Long Struggle with Race and the Death Penalty in North Carolina," *UNC Law Review*, 2010. (Selections)

### **WEEK 3: The Question of Punishment and the Birth of the Prison**

**Tuesday, September 8**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Judith Butler, "[On Cruelty](#)," *London Review of Books*, 17 July 2014

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975): Part I: Ch. 1, Part II: Ch. 2.

**Thursday, September 10**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Dylan Rodríguez, "(Non-Scenes) of Captivity: The Common Sense of Punishment and Death," *Radical History Review*, Fall 2006: pp. 9-32.

[Black Death in Dixie: Racism and the Death Penalty in the United States](#) (2007, 26 minutes) -- this is available as streaming video through Perkins (watch before class)

### **WEEK 4: Telling Public History: the Case of Pauli Murray**

**Tuesday, September 15:**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Pauli Murray, Chapters 2 and 3, *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), pp 24-44.

Leslie Brown, *Upbuilding Black Durham: Gender, Class, and Black Community Development in the Jim Crow South*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008, pp. 27-53, 109-146.

Google hangout with HAL TBA

**\*\* Wednesday, September 16: Attend evening talk: Dylan Rodriguez (Ethnic Studies, University of California - Riverside) , “The Illiteracy of ‘Mass Incarceration’: Racial Terror and the Insurgent Poetics of Evisceration”**

**6pm 0012 Westbrook Hall (West Campus)**

**Thursday, September 17:** Class convenes at Pauli Murray exhibit at Scrap Exchange

[Imp, Crusader, Dude, Priest: An Exhibit about the Life and Legacy of 20th Century Human Rights Champion Pauli Murray](#). We are going to use this exhibit to discuss ideas around presentation, history and social justice. Please post on the Reading Notes forum about how this exhibit presents information, where it is located and what materials it uses. What are the main take-aways? What was effective? What did you learn that you didn't know? Post your response after the visit while it is still fresh in your memory (by midnight, Thursday September 17th).

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Mary Rizzo, and Martha Swan, “Public History and Mass Incarceration,” *The Public Historian*, 36(1): 61–70, 2014.

**RESPONSE PAPER ONE IS DUE AT 5 PM ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18**

**WEEK 5: Histories of Capital Punishment in the United States**

**Tuesday, September 22:**

**ASSIGNMENTS: From Lynchings to Capital Punishment**

David Garland, “Modes of Capital Punishment: The Death Penalty in Historical Perspective” in *America’s Death Penalty Between Past and Present* (Eds David Garland, Randall McGowen, Michael Meranze), NYU Press, 2011: pp. 30-63.

Stuart Banner, “Traces of Slavery: Race and the Death Penalty in Historical Perspective” in *From Lynch Mobs to the Killing State: Race and the Death Penalty in America* (Eds Charles J. Ogletree Jr. & Austin Sarat), NYU Press, 2006: pp. 96-116.

**Thursday, September 24: In-Class Work Day**

Each team presents a 10-minute summary of their brain storming sessions on their research project.

**ASSIGNMENTS: NC and and the KKK**

[Klansville, USA \(American Experience, 2014\)](#) (watch before class - streaming on-line)

[Executive summary of the Greensboro Truth and Reconciliation Commission report](#)

### **WEEK 6: Personal stories of the death penalty**

**Tuesday, September 29**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Scott Vollum, and Dennis R. Longmire, "Giving Voice to the Dead: Last Statements of the Condemned," *Contemporary Justice Review* 12(1): 5–26.

Discussion of *Last Words of the Executed* (Elder)

#### **DUE: National Exchange Blog Post #1 (due by 8am on Tuesday, September 29th)**

What did you discover about the history of incarceration/detention in your university's community, or nationally, that personally struck you most, and why? You could identify one fact, image, person, quote, moment in time. What new perspective could it offer on incarceration/detention issues most pressing for your university's community, or nationally, today? What are your concerns or ideas for interpreting your community's history as a catalyst for national dialogue on contemporary issues?

**REQUIRED EVENT: *Into the Abyss* (107 minutes, 2011), 7 PM, HOLSTI ROOM, PERKINS LIBRARY**

In his fascinating exploration of a triple homicide case in Conroe, Texas, master filmmaker Werner Herzog (*Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, *Grizzly Man*) probes the human psyche to explore why people kill—and why a state kills. In intimate conversations with those involved, including 28-year-old death row inmate Michael Perry (scheduled to die within eight days of appearing on-screen), Herzog achieves what he describes as “a gaze into the abyss of the human soul.” Herzog’s inquiries also extend to the families of the victims and perpetrators as well as a state executioner and pastor who’ve been with death row prisoners as they’ve taken their final breaths. As he’s so often done before, Herzog’s investigation unveils layers of humanity, making an enlightening trip out of ominous territory.

**Thursday, October 1: NO CLASS**

#### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

REQUIRED: Attend 7 pm screening of “Into The Abyss,” part of the Rights! Camera! Action! human rights film series

### **WEEK 7: Working on Death Row**

**Tuesday, October 6:**

In class work, outline for the national exchange

Google hangout with HAL TBD

**DUE OCTOBER 7: Lived space assignment (see assignment in Resources folder).  
Please post by midnight on October 7.**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Thursday, October 8:**

In-class guest: Jennifer Vitry, Executive Director, [NOLA Investigates](#)

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Innocence Project Case: [Damon Thibodeaux](#)

Watch: 48 Hours, [“Last Chance” \(streaming on-line\)](#)

**\*\*Attend evening lecture: Daniel LaChance (History, Emory University), “The Cultural History of Capital Punishment, 1977-Present”**

**FHI Garage, Bay 4, Smith Warehouse, 6pm**

## **FALL BREAK**

**WEEK 9: Updates and project plans  
NO NOTES DUE**

**Thursday, October 15:** Workshop to finalize scope of team projects

Teams will present a 10-minute report on their plans and include some draft content, which we will share and provide feedback for.

**WEEK 10: Structures and mechanisms of death**

**Tuesday, October 20:** Class discussion of Turow’s *The Ultimate Punishment*

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

[GLOSSIP ET AL. v. GROSS ET AL.](#), CERTIORARI TO THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE TENTH CIRCUIT. Read Justice Scalia’s concurrence and Justice Breyer’s dissent.

**Thursday, October 22: Efforts at reform**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Stuart Banner, “The Origins of Opposition,” *The Death Penalty: An American History* (Harvard Press, 2002): pp. 88-111.

Steinhauer, Jennifer. 2015. "[Bipartisan Push Builds to Relax Sentencing Laws](#)," *The New York Times*, July 29, 2015.

## **WEEK 11: Research and Interpretation I: Working with Vulnerable Populations**

**Tuesday, October 27**

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

Jill McCorkel and Kristen Myers, "What Difference does Difference Make? Position and Privilege in the Field," *Qualitative Sociology* (2003): pp. 199-231.

**Thursday, October 29:** TEAM TIME: this is time to meet and work in teams -- Jecca and Robin will be available to talk over issues.

### **DUE: National Exchange Blog Post #2 (due by 8am, Tuesday October 27th)**

Identify something by a student or team from another university that surprised you, represented a different perspective, or raised a question for you. This could be:

- Something you learned from another university's content outline
- Another team's approach to interpreting their local story (such as their big question, use of narratives, images, choice of story to focus on), as shown in their content outline
- A statement in another student's reflection piece.

What comments do you have for your fellow student/team? How did their work challenge or influence your own thinking about what's most important to share with the public; challenges/strategies for developing the exhibit, or any other aspect of your work on the project?

NOTE: The hub will assign one content outline for you to review.

## **WEEK 12: Research and Interpretation II: Working through Stereotypes**

**Tuesday, November 3:**

### **ASSIGNMENTS**

Lisa Chaco, "The Violence of Value," *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected* (NYU Press: 2012): pp. 1-33.

**Thursday, November 5:** TEAM TIME: this is time to meet and work in teams -- Jecca and Robin will be available to talk over issues.

## **WEEK 13: Solitary Confinement as Death**

**Tuesday, November 10: Other Death Sentences**

### **ASSIGNMENTS:**

[Jennifer Gonnerman, "Before the Law," \*New Yorker\*, October 6 2014](#)

[Jennifer Gonnerman, "Kalief Browder, 1993-2015," June 7 2015](#)

**\*\*Wednesday, November 11: Attend evening lecture, Lisa Guenther (Philosophy, Vanderbilt University**

"Carceral Dreams, Nuclear Afterthoughts"

**6pm, (location TBA)**

**Thursday, November 12: Lisa Guenther class visit**

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013): pp. 161-167, 221-230, 244-251.

**RESPONSE PAPER TWO IS DUE AT 5 PM ON NOVEMBER 13**

**WEEK 14  
NO NOTES DUE**

**Tuesday, November 17** PLEASE USE THIS TIME TO WORK WITH YOUR TEAMS

**Thursday, November 19:** Workshop to show progress of team projects

Teams will present a 10-minute report on their progress and include close-to-final content, which we will share and provide feedback for.

**Tuesday, November 24: NO CLASS**

**DUE: National Exchange Blog Post #3 (due by 8am, Tuesday November 24th)**

Post prompt: Identify an aspect of another team's draft content that inspired or disturbed you. How did it influence your thinking about incarceration/detention today, what, if anything, should change, and what role you might play? How do you think this material might influence the thinking of people who see the exhibit? What individuals or groups do you think need to see this material, and how could you imagine engaging them -- within or outside of the exhibit?

**WEEK 15 Final work  
NO NOTES DUE**

**Tuesday, December 1:** Open class

Jessica and Robin will be in class to meet with teams finalizing their content, due to us by 5 pm -- since we are working with the HAL schedule, there will be **no extensions**.

**Thursday, December 3:** LAST DAY OF CLASS

Class summary and evaluations

**FINAL REVISIONS OF PROJECTS DUE BY 12/10/15**