Convict Labor in the American South from the Civil War to the Great Depression
Directed Reading

Instructor: Dr. Karin Shapiro
Student: Jackson Skeen
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Course Description:
This independent study will examine the convict labor system that emerged in the post-Civil War South. The student will explore the political and economic contexts in which convict leasing developed, analyze the demographics of those ensnared in convict labor, note the geographic variations in the convict lease system, and highlight the conditions in which convicts lived and labored. Throughout the semester, we will draw connections between convict leasing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to the modern-day carceral state. In addition to a much deeper understanding of the convict lease system, the student will gain research experience and competence working with large quantities of critical texts. Readings will consist chiefly of academic accounts of convict leasing and prison labor conditions in the South from 1865 to roughly 1928.

Class format:
This course consists primarily of independent readings, combined with bi-weekly meetings to 1) discuss the various monographs the student has read and 2) regularly review the direction of the student’s inquiry.

Reading Material:
Available from Duke University Libraries.

Scheduled Meetings and Work Expectations:
Meetings with Professor Shapiro will take place every two Fridays, with the first meeting falling on Friday, January 13th. Meetings will occur on a weekly basis as needed. By noon on the Wednesday of each week, the student will submit written summaries of the books, along with key questions that have emerged.

Course Requirements:
The grade in the course will be based on:
1. Biweekly written work on the student’s developing analysis of convict leasing and prison labor in the American South: 50%
2. Class discussions: 50%

Thematic Organization¹:
An Introduction to Convict Labor and Leasing in the American South


¹ Texts may be repeated in different sections when applicable.

Cable, George W. “The Convict Lease System In The Southern States.” *Century Illustrated Magazine* Feb. 1884: 582-600. -- 5, xxvii, 582


**Convict Labor in Alabama**


**Convict Labor in Georgia**


**Convict Labor in Louisiana**

**Convict Labor in Mississippi**


**Convict Labor in Tennessee**


**Convict Labor in Texas**


**Convict Labor in Virginia**


**Convict Labor and Women**


**Films Exploring Race and Incarceration**


**A History of Anti-Black Racism in the U.S.**


**Present-Day Implications of the Practice of Convict Leasing**


