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PRISON ABOLITION CLASS

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The following is a syllabus for a course on Prison Abolition that was co-taught by the founder of Black and Pink, Jason Lydon. This collection of readings is intended as a primer for readers on the creation and function of the US prison industrial complex. The course was taught in a divinity school and there is an emphasis on the role of religion and theology in this collection of readings. Many secular abolitionist efforts miss some of the important connections between religion and the creation as well as resistance to the US carceral state. Enjoy these readings in groups or on your own.

Session 1 -

Session 2 – The Birth of the Penitentiary
- Required Readings
• **Cruel and Unusual: The Culture of Punishment in America**, Anne-Marie Cusac (Yale University Press: New Haven, 2009) Ch. 2 and 3 “A Heart Is Not Wholly Corrupted’ Revolution, Religion and Punishment” and “Reforming the Reforms” (pages 31-71)


• **With Liberty For Some: 500 Years of Imprisonment in America**, Scott Christianson (Northeastern University Press; Boston, 1998) Ch. 4 “Little Man in the Big House” (pages 110-162)

**Session 3 – The 13th Amendment, Convict Leasing, and The New Jim Crow**

**Required Readings**

• **With Liberty For Some: 500 Years of Imprisonment in America**, Scott Christianson (Northeastern University Press; Boston, 1998) Ch.5 “Scandal and Reform” (pages 163-203)


**Suggested Reading**


**Session 4 – White Supremacy and the Racialization of Incarceration**

**Required Readings**


**Suggested Reading**


**Session 5 – Death Penalty**

**Required Reading**


**Suggested Reading**


**SPRING BREAK**
read *When the Prisoners Ran Walpole: A True Story in the Movement for Prison Abolition*, Jamie Bissonette (South End Press: Cambridge, 2008)

**Session 6 – Presentation by Jamie Bisonette and/or Bobby Delello on the story of Walpole**
Required Reading
· Catch up on reading if behind
Suggested Reading
· “Psychological Warfare at Norfolk Prison Camp,” Juno Bakali Tshombe/Craig Dee Anderson in *Who Took the Weight? Black Voices from Norfolk Prison* (Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts: Boston, 1972) pages 91-97

**Session 7 – Women and Incarceration**
Required Reading

**Session 8 – Heteropatriarchy and the Prison Industrial Complex**
Required Reading

Suggested Reading

**Session 9 – Healthcare and Prisons**

http://www.blackandpink.org/prison-abolition-class/
Required Reading


Session 10 – Police and Guard Labor: The First Line of the Prison Industrial Complex

Required Readings

• Our Enemies in Blue, Kristian Williams (South End Press: Cambridge, 2007) ch 6 “Police Autonomy and Blue Power”
• “Garrison America,” Samuel Bowles and Arjun Jayadev in Economists’ Voice March 2007 pages 1-7

Session 11 – Theology and Abolition

Required Readings


Session 12 – Transformative Justice

Required Readings

• (skim) “Toward Transformative Justice” Generation 5

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