

## FSP 101: "Incarceration Nation": Literature of the Prison

Professor Michele Lise Tarter

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Office Hours: T/F 11:30-12:30 PM and by appointment

**Fall 2013**

### Introduction:

This course will explore the literature by and about prisoners from 600 AD to the present. In addition to reading a variety of sources written across the centuries, we will help current-day prisoners in the production of their own autobiographical writings. Interdisciplinary in nature, this course will weave together the study of gender, criminology, psychology, sociology, and, most notably, literary analysis of such groundbreaking, provocative material written by one of the most neglected, silenced, but all-too-critical sectors of our population-- the incarcerated.

### Required Texts:

Bell Gale Chevigny, ed., *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing* (Arcade, 1999)

H. Bruce Franklin, ed., *Prison Writing in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America* (Penguin, 1998)

Wally Lamb, ed., *Couldn't Keep It to Myself : Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters* (Regan, 2003)

Judith A. Scheffler, ed., *Wall Tappings: An International Anthology of Women's Prison Writings, 200 to the Present* (Feminist Press, 2003)

### On Reserve:

Jack Henry Abbott, *In the Belly of the Beast: Letters from Prison* (Vintage, 1991)

Jeff Evans, ed., *Undoing Time: American Prisoners in Their Own Words* (Northeastern UP, 2001)

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage, 1995)

Bruce H. Franklin, *Prison Literature in America : The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (Oxford UP, 1989)

Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Continuum, 2000)

Stephen J. Hartnett, *Incarceration Nation: Investigative Prison Poems of Hope and Terror* (AltaMira Press, 2003)

bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education As the Practice of Freedom* (Routledge, 1994)

Etheridge Knight et al (Indiana State Prison), *Black Voices from Prison* (Pathfinder Press, 1970)

Jonathan Kozol, *Illiterate America* (New American Library, 1986)

Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (Ballantine, 1989)

Leonard Peltier, *Prison Writings : My Life Is My Sun Dance* (St. Martin's, 2000)

Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking: An Eyewitness Account of the Death Penalty in the United States* (Vintage, 1996)

Philip Priestley, ed., *Jail Journeys: The English Prison Experience since 1918: Modern Prison Writings* (Routledge, 1989)  
Barbara Schreiner, ed., *A Snake with Ice Water: Prison Writings by South African Women* (Johannesburg, South Africa : COSAW, Congress of South African Writers, 1992)  
Tommy Trantino, *Lock the Lock* (Bantam, 1975)  
Jean Trounstein, *Shakespeare Behind Bars: The Power of Drama in a Women's Prison* (St. Martin's, 2001)

### **Course Requirements:**

#### **A. Reading, attendance, and participation in class discussions**

It is critical that you keep up with our reading schedule. Attendance is equally important. Absences will be excused only for those reasons recognized as legitimate by the college and outlined in TCNJ's *Undergraduate Bulletin*. You are expected to complete all reading assignments; participate actively, intelligently, and consistently in our class discussions; respect others and respond to their ideas both sensitively and constructively; and always come to class promptly. There will be some unannounced quizzes to ensure that you are keeping up with the reading. The average of these quiz grades will also be computed into your class participation grade. The College's attendance policy can be accessed at: <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8162>.

#### **B. Essays**

You will be asked to write 3 essays (4-5 pages typed) in response to class readings and our discussion of themes, problems and issues arising in the genre of prison literature. Your essays must include a concisely structured argument or interpretation of the designated texts, based on the writing topic you will be given in class. These essays will undergo several stages--prewriting, drafting, and revision; with each stage, you will not be given a conventional letter grade but will receive feedback regarding your developing skills in reasoning, interpretation, and argument. The final, polished draft of each essay will be graded using a conventional letter grade scale, assessed for its format, quality of writing, concision, accuracy, and variety of sources used. *Be prepared to share these essays with your peers in class.*

#### **C. Individual and Group Research Project/Oral Presentation**

You are to sign up for your group project by **4:00PM on Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup>**. Send to me (via email or voicemail) your top three choices for projects, listed in order of preference (I will do my very best to give you one of your three selections).

The premise of these group projects is to promote *active learning* in the classroom. Each group will consist of 2-3 students, and all members are equally responsible for contributing to the project; therefore, each person will be graded

individually. As a group, you are responsible for presenting your assigned topic or text to the class (at which time the class will have already read the material). In preparation for your group project, you must first complete the assigned reading carefully. Then, you and your group members are to investigate and research as many critical essays written on this topic or text as you can find; please note that the more research you locate, the better and stronger your presentation should prove to be. As you gather insights and ideas, be sure to share these with each other, and begin to envision how you may bring this topic to life in the classroom. I invite you to **be as creative as you dare**.

Your specific requirements for the presentation include: a) beginning the presentation with a creative interpretation of the topic, based on the close reading and the critical research that you have done; b) offering the most \*fascinating\* details about your author (if you have one)--you may give no more than five details (if you choose to give a chronological history of your author, you may do so in a handout, but not read this to the class); c) condensing your research and sharing only the most salient points of analysis; d) leading the class in a discussion/analysis of the literary text .

Your group will have *only 30-45 minutes* to give this presentation, so it is imperative that you organize all of your materials in the most effective, stimulating, and interesting way (I recommend 10-15 minutes for creative presentation, 15 minutes for sharing of critical research, and 15-20 minutes for discussion). Collaboration is essential here.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: Your group must meet with me at least one week before your presentation and, at that time, give to me a detailed, organized outline of your project.**

Then, at the class following your presentation, you are to turn in **a group portfolio** (in a binder or folder) with the following materials:

- 1) a **detailed outline** of your group presentation, including a description and rationale of your creative interpretation;
- 2) each group member's **Annotated Bibliography**, which documents your research for this project--a minimum of four (4) critical sources is required for each member, with no sharing or overlapping of sources (see attached handout);
- 3) a **list of questions** your group has designed to ask the class which are intended to stimulate discussion and ideas (note: these should focus on analysis and not on plot summary);
- 4) any **creative materials** you might have included in your presentation, such as handouts for the class, photographs, video or audio tapes, collages, etc.; and
- 5) each group member's **personal, confidential summary** of the group experience, including insights, comments and suggestions, as well as specific

details of what you have contributed to this group effort (the letter should be delivered in a sealed envelope so that others in the group don't read it).

Each person in the group will be graded individually, based on the following criteria: evidence of rigorous research of primary and secondary sources, culminating in a formal annotated bibliography prepared in MLA (Modern Language Association) format; an oral research presentation during the group project, graded for its accuracy, organization, and delivery of material; written contributions to the final group portfolio (including research outline, reflections upon the group experience in a private, confidential summary, and any other supporting materials) evaluated for their quality of writing, format, and concision; and overall participation in the creative, interpretive aspect of the project, assessed according to its suitability to the topic and the extent to which it engages significant and problematic issues in the text.

#### **D. Service Learning Project and Presentation**

We will have the opportunity of participating in a service learning project devoted entirely to the study of prisoners and education. You will then be invited to give a brief presentation to the class based on your reflections and revelations in this service learning experience.

#### **E. Final Examination**

This examination will be comprehensive, based on the process and progress of the class. It will include both objective (short answer/identification) and interpretive (essay) questions, assessing your familiarity with and interpretation of the texts we have studied. The College's final exam policy can be seen at: <http://recreg.pages.tcnj.edu/269-2/>

#### **Grading:**

Essay #1:	10%
Essay #2:	15%
Essay #3:	15%
Class participation (incl. Quizzes):	10%
Group Project:	20%
Final Examination:	20%
Service Learning Project and presentation:	10%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Other Important Information:

A note about lateness: unless you have made prior arrangements with me, any late work will receive a failing grade. You must, however, turn in all work to be considered for a passing grade.

Academic Integrity: The College's policy for Academic Integrity states: "Academic dishonesty is any attempt by the student to gain academic advantage through dishonest means, to submit, as his/her own, work which has not been done by him/her or to give improper aid to another student in the completion of an assignment. Such dishonesty would include, but is not limited to: submitting as his/her own a project, paper, report, test, or speech copied from, partially copied, or paraphrased from the work of another (whether the source is printed, under copyright, or in manuscript form). Credit must be given for words quoted or paraphrased. The rules apply to any academic dishonesty, whether the work is graded or ungraded, group or individual, written or oral." For more information, please consult the TCNJ website: <http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=7642>

## Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA):

Anyone requiring special adaptations or accommodations will benefit from contacting Terri Yamiolkowski in the Office of Differing Abilities (771.2571). For more information on The College's ADA policy, please see the TCNJ website: <http://affirm.pages.tcnj.edu/key-documents/>

## The Write Place:

The Write Place, which is located in Roscoe West Hall, Suite 101, is an excellent place to get help on your papers. Call *The Write Place* at 771-2985 or check their available hours at <http://tutoringcenter.pages.tcnj.edu/>

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**SYLLABUS**

(Please note: These dates/assignments are **subject to change**. I often announce changes at the end of class, due to the process and progress of our discussions. Therefore, should you miss a class, you should contact a peer to see where we left off in discussion and where we are headed in the next class.)

T Aug. 27 Introduction to class

**\*Group Project Selections due on Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, by 4:00PM\* (via email)**

F 30 ***Early Prison Writings: Looking across Centuries and Worlds***  
Readings from *Wall Tappings*: Introduction and pp. 42-50  
**Library Session with Marc Meola**

T Sept. 3 **No class** (Labor Day scheduling)

F 6 ***Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,***  
By Michel Foucault (R): pp. 3-31  
***From Plantation to Penitentiary: Slavery and Incarceration***  
Readings from *Prison Writing in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America*: pp. 1-34

T 10 ***The Prison System: "Made in America"***  
Readings from *Prison Writing in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America*:  
pp. 37-57  
Documentary: "Writ Writer"

F 13 **Group Project #1: "America's Unique Brand of Incarceration"**

T 17 ***"Made in America," continued***  
Readings from *Prison Writing in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century America*:  
pp. 73-89 and 119-129  
**"Wordshop" video**: Discussion of literature and writing  
**Guest Speaker: Paula Figueroa-Vega, Bonner Center**

F 20 ***Race, Chance, Change: The Racial Divide in the Prison Industrial Complex***  
Readings from *Doing Time* (pp. 175-216); Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, and Leonard Peltier, *My Life is My Sun Dance*(R)  
**Workshopping: Rough Draft of Essay #1 due**

- T 24 *Race, Chance, Change* continued  
Guest Speaker: Robert Fiorello, PEI Kids
- Wed., Sept. 25 *Visit to Mercer County Correctional Facility*  
(9:00-11:30AM)
- F 27 *Race, Chance, Change* continued  
Group Project #2: "Racial Lines Behind Bars"
- Saturday, Sept. 28 *Visit to PEI (Prevention Education Intervention)*  
in Trenton 9:00AM-1:00PM  
**GROUP A: Visit/Observation**
- T Oct. 1 Stan "Tookie" Williams, *Redemption* (film)  
Final Essay #1 due
- F 4 *Gender and the Prison Industrial Complex*  
Kathryn Watterston Burkhart, *Women in Prison* (R):  
Part I, chapter 1  
Guest Speaker: Determined Donna
- Saturday, Oct. 5 *Visit to PEI (Prevention Education Intervention)*  
in Trenton 9:00 AM-1:00PM  
**GROUP A: Activity**
- T 8 *Gender and the Prison*, continued  
Workshopping: Rough Draft of Essay #2 due
- F 11 *Gender and the Prison*, continued  
Group Project #3: "Gender Disparity Behind Bars"
- T 15 *Time and Timelessness: Years without Days*  
Readings from *Doing Time*: pp. 25-46
- F 18 *Shawshank Redemption* (film)  
Final Essay #2 due
- T 22 *Lock the Lock*  
Guest Speaker: Tommy T
- F 25 *Death Row*  
Readings from *Doing Time* (pp. 301-321), *Dead Man Walking*,  
and *Lock the Lock*  
Group Project #4: "Life in the Death House"

- T 29 No Class – Fall Break
- F Nov. 1 **Final Essay #3 due**
- Saturday, Nov. 2 Visit to PEI (Prevention Education Intervention)  
in Trenton 9:00AM-1:00PM  
GROUP B: Visit/Observation**
- T 5 ***Coming into Language: The Prison Literary Renaissance***  
Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language  
and Action" (in Lorde, *Cancer Journals*, pp. 18-23);  
Readings from bell hooks, Paulo Friere (R)
- F 8 ***Couldn't Keep It to Myself* (pp. 1-17; 95-111)**
- Saturday, Nov. 9 Visit to PEI (Prevention Education Intervention)  
in Trenton 9:00AM-1:00PM  
GROUP B: Activity**
- T 12 ***Couldn't Keep It to Myself* (pp. 210-243; 267-333)**  
**Group Project #5: "The Prisoners' Power of Writing and  
Breaking the Silence"**
- F 15 ***"What I Want My Words to Do to You"* (film)**
- T 19 ***"Freedom"***  
Documentary Film: *Freedom Road*
- F 22 ***"Salvation" and Incarceration***  
Readings from *Undoing Time* (pp. 163-193)
- T 26 ***"Incarceration Nation"***  
**Service Learning Presentations**
- F 29 No Class: Thanksgiving Break
- T Dec. 3 ***"Incarceration Nation"***  
**Service Learning Presentations**
- F 6 Last day of classes

**Final Examination: TBA**



## **Annotated Bibliography Assignment for Group Projects**

Professor Michele Tarter

Fall 2013

### **General Description:**

An Annotated Bibliography is a report of the research you have completed for your group project.

### **Specific Description:**

For this class, your annotated bibliography should be in an **essay format**. It should begin with a list of the sources you consulted, and these must be alphabetically cited *in correct MLA format*. (The MLA Handbook is available in the library and can also be purchased in the college bookstore.) Your bibliographic essay should then summarize a) the thesis of each author's work (in a 3-4 sentence description), followed with b) a description of how this source helped you in your overall research project. You can either present a paragraph for each work cited which includes these two components, or you can integrate the sources more fluidly in a discussion of the major issues/topics in your research journey. There is no length specification for this essay: it will surely depend on the amount of research you have completed and your stylistic analysis of those works.

### **Format:**

As stated above, you are to use MLA format for citing all sources. It is also critical that you use a majority of *current scholarship* (that is, *written in the past decade*) and that your bibliography be a *combination of journal articles, books, and, if necessary, only one website*. You should know beforehand that your group will not always find 15-20 sources written solely on your specific text. Therefore, you will have to be creative in your research journey and expand your thinking/analysis of your text by considering its historical and cultural contexts. Please note: if you cite internet research material (and you may *only use one of these*), be sure to document it correctly.

### **Guidelines:**

I expect each member of the group to research **a minimum of four sources** (with no sharing or overlapping of sources) and to complete an Annotated Bibliography for the Group Project Portfolio.