**THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

**THE GRADUATE CENTER**

**WOMEN’S AND GENDER STUDIES – SPRING 2025**

**MALS 72100: LIBERAL STUDIES –FEMINIST TEXTS AND CONTEXTS**

**ABOLITIONIST FEMINISMS**

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 4-6:30pm, Room 4107, on Zoom, or by appointment

**Course Description:**

This course explores the historical, political, and cultural emergence of feminisms by studying the issue of prison. We will use abolition as a frame to discuss key feminist texts and different contexts, both with respect to time, space, and place. We will examine abolitionist histories, policies, struggles, and visions, with the subject of analysis as women, gender-nonconforming, trans, and/or queer people and the object of analysis as their texts. We will focus on the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and ability, among other identities. We will address numerous themes, such as vindication of human rights, transcendence from imprisonment, conditions and deprivations, the importance of community and relationships, and more importantly, solidarity with other prisoners. We will interrogate the prison industrial complex in the United States, South Africa, the Philippines, Ireland, and many other countries. We will investigate the complexities of how gender matters in racial, economic, and transnational politics and structures. Of particular focus will be the state-sanctioned historical objectification of women and trans political prisoners (e.g., loss of intellectual, emotional, and sexual freedom as well as egregious prison conditions and deprivations) and how they resist systemic and interlocking workings of dehumanization and its subsequent domination (e.g., sexism, cissexism, racism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and colonialism, etc.) by building supportive coalitions with social movements that embrace an emancipatory theory and praxis through their prison writing. We discuss how prison conditions of labor exploitation (e.g., unpaid or poorly compensated work) and sexual violence (e.g., rape, beatings, and harassment) are normative patterns of torture and are used as a means of social control. We also will examine the metaphorical prisons to which marginalized women and gender variant people belong in oppressive societies – poverty, homelessness, solitary parenting, intimate partner violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, meaningless work, inadequate health care, and reproductive concerns. You will facilitate a class as well as do research projects based on your aesthetic, political, and scholarly interests.

**Required Texts:**

All texts are on Blackboard.

**Course Objectives:**

• You will do close readings of texts, including summarizing and annotating, and understand social, political, cultural, and historical issues, contexts, and terms.

• You will create central arguments that include a clear topic, a solid stance, and provide support for your main ideas by quoting, paraphrasing, and analyzing passages from texts.

• You will recognize your writing processes, receive feedback from your peers, conference with me, and revise your major writing assignments.

• You will engage in rigorous discussion that fosters critical reflection about feminist theories in your lives, in the scholarship, in the world, and in the texts through collaborative interaction.

• You will write grammatically and mechanically correct papers and cite in academic format.

**Requirements:**

•A co-facilitation of a class based on an assigned reading, which includes an overview and discussion questions to lead a small group discussion of approximately 45 minutes

•An argumentative research paper, researching a feminist prison issue (i.e., hate crimes against Black trans women) that includes at least 10-15 scholarly peer-reviewed articles, goes through a revision process, and is approximately 15-20 pages

• Class participation and discussion

•All written assignments should be posted on Blackboard

**Grade Distribution:**

Presentation 30%

Research Paper 50%

Participation 20%

**Writing Procedures:**

• You will engage in a process of composing (i.e., prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading) for all writing assignments.

• You will receive a wealth of feedback on your essay from your peers. You also will conference with me. Before you submit your final drafts, you will produce several drafts for each essay, including for peer review and professor review. You will present your papers to the class during writing workshops once during the semester for feedback.

• You will have the opportunity to revise your essay after your initial grade is recorded so long as you consider my feedback and submit within one week. Revisions have the possibility of replacing the previous grade, but only if substantial improvement is evident. In other words, simply changing mechanical errors (i.e., commas) in your essay will not raise grades.

• You will be given ample feedback. This feedback will allow you to learn from the comments and apply the comments in your future writing projects.

**Discussion Procedures:**

• You will be well-prepared for all class discussions by doing all the assigned reading and writing prior to class.

• You will demonstrate your understanding and analysis of the readings by being fully engaged in class discussions.

• You will be respectful of your peers’ ideas and my ideas.

**Civility:**

The Graduate Center is committed to the highest standards of academic and ethical integrity, acknowledging that respect for yourself and others is the foundation of educational excellence. Civility in the classroom and respect for diversity and the opinions of others are very important in an academic environment. It is likely you may not agree with everything said or discussed in the classroom, yet courteous behavior and responses are expected. Acts of harassment and discrimination based on matters of race, ethnicity, class, gender, gender identity, sexuality, religion, and/ or ability, etc., are not acceptable. I promote strict enforcement of these rules. All students, faculty, or staff have a right to be in a safe environment, free of disturbance, and civil in all aspects of human relations.

**Names and Pronouns:** I affirm all forms of gender expressions and identities. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is on the class roster, please let me know. Feel free to inform me of your pronoun or if you do not have a pronoun (i.e., name only). If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more information, please visit <http://www2.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-procedures/equal-opportunity-and-non-discrimination-policy/and> <https://www1.cuny.edu/mu/forum/2017/02/24/protecting-the-rights-of-transgender-and-gender-nonconforming-students/>​

**Artificial Intelligence/ Chat GPT**

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is strictly prohibited in all coursework and assignments. This includes, but is not limited to, the use of AI-generated text, speech, or images, as well as the use of AI tools or software to complete any portion of a project or assignment. Any violations of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including a failing grade for the assignment or course. Our goal is to encourage critical thinking and creativity, and the use of AI detracts from this objective. Students are expected to use their own knowledge, research and analysis to complete coursework.

If you are not yet familiar with ChatGPT or its capabilities, you are now: this policy statement was generated by the ChatGPT AI engine based on the prompt “write a syllabus policy statement forbidding the use of AI.”

**Accommodations:**

CUNY Policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability. The Graduate Center provides adaptive technologies and services for qualifying students. For more information, please see the section “Student Disability Services” on the page <http://www.gc.cuny.edu/Prospective-Current-Students/Student-Life/Resources>. In addition, please consult with me if I can help meet your need for accommodations in this area.

**Participation:**

The class will meet in person for seminars. Students who require accommodations will participate virtually. Active participation in seminar discussions includes: finish reading assigned readings, being prepared to raise questions, comments, observations, analyses of connections and discontinuities in/between the texts at hand and readings from earlier classes.

Each seminar meeting will loosely follow this agenda:

1. Welcome (Prof. Washburn) (5 min)

2. Upcoming deadlines and readings (Prof. Washburn) (5 min)

3. Announcements (Seminar participants) (5 min)

4. Overview of Assigned Reading (Prof. Washburn) (10 min)

5. Presentations and Group Discussions (Co-facilitators, Prof. Washburn) (40-45 min)

6. Report Back (Co-facilitators, Seminar participants) (30-40 min)

7. Closing (Seminar participants) (5 min)

**Co-Facilitation**:

Once during the semester, each student will submit a facilitation overview and discussion

questions to share with the class for one week of the seminar. Each student’s overview and discussion questions will be due online by 2pm on Mondays (one day before the scheduled seminar meeting). You can post your overview and discussion questions earlier than then, too. During the online seminar meeting, you will give a presentation/facilitate and a group discussion. You will use at least one of your discussion questions to engage fellow seminar participants in discussing the assigned reading for the day. You can facilitate the seminar with your co-facilitator using the discussion questions and overview that you have prepared.

**Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged (intentionally or unintentionally) use of summary, paraphrase, direct quotation, language, statistics, or ideas from articles or other information sources, including the Internet. For further information about avoiding plagiarism please review *Avoiding and Detecting Plagiarism: A Guide for Graduate Students with Examples*: <https://www.gc.cuny.edu/CUNY_GC/media/CUNY-Graduate-Center/PDF/Policies/General/AvoidingPlagiarism.pdf?ext=.pdf>. The Graduate Center is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity. You must cite according to MLA, Chicago, ASA, APA, or some other academic format. Cite in whatever style you choose (footnotes, end notes, in-text parenthetical citations), but you must cite your work. If you plagiarize all or part of a writing assignment, you will automatically receive an F on it, and it cannot be revised. If you repeat the offense, you will fail the course. You also may be subject to other disciplinary measures. The Graduate College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty.

**Schedule of Assignments:**

**Please note:** The following schedule is tentative and may change based on the needs of the class. Please read to contribute to our dicussions.

**Week One (1/28): Introductions and Metaphorical Prisons**

“I wake in middle-of the-night terror,” Ericka Huggins

**Week Two (2/4):** **Prison Reform or Abolition and Intersectional Identity**

*Are Prisons Obsolete*?, Angela Y. Davis

Excerpts from *Abolition. Feminism. Now*., Angela Y. Davis, Gina Dent, Erica R. Meiners, and Beth E. Richie, “Abolition” and “Feminism”

**Week Three (2/11): The Prison Industrial Complex and Social Control**

Excerpts from *Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis*,

Christian Parenti, *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex*, ed. Julia Sudbury, and *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America’s Prison Nation*, ch. “Black Women, Male Violence, and the Buildup of a Prison Nation,”

Beth E. Richie

**Paper Topic Due**

**\*No class 2/18**

**Week Four (2/25): Colorblindness, Caste, and Incarceration**

Excerpts from *The New Jim Crow*, Michelle Alexander

**Week Five (3/4): Police State, Race, Gender, Disability, and Sexuality:**

**Violence against Black and Women of Color**

Excerpts from *Invisible No More: Police Violence Against Black Women and Women of Color,* “Policing Paradigms and Criminalizing Webs,” “Policing Girls,” “Policing Motherhood,” “Policing Disability,” “Policing Gender Lines,” and “Policing Sex,” Andrea Ritchie

Excerpts from *No More Police. The Case for Abolition*, Mariame Kaba and Andrea J. Ritchie, “Cops Don’t Stop Violence,” “How Do We Get There? Toward a Police-Free Future,” and “Black Feminist Musings”

**Week Six (3/11): Deviant Penalty and Sexuality**

Excerpts from *Queer (In)Justice, The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*, chs. “Gleeful Gay Killers, Lethal Lesbians, and Deceptive Gender Benders: Queer Criminal Archetypes” and “False Promises: Criminal Legal Responses to Violence against LGBT People,” Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. Ritchie, and Kay Whitelock

Excerpt from *All Our Trials: Prisons, Policing, and the Feminist Fight to End Violence*, Emily L. Thuma, ch. “Printing Abolition: The Transformative Power of Women’s Prison Narratives”

**Week Seven (3/18):** **Incarceration**, **Gender Nonconformity, and Trans Lives**

Excerpts from *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*, eds. Eric A. Stanley and Nat Smith, chs. “Foreword,” CeCe McDonald, “Introduction: Fugitive Flesh: Gender Self-Determination, Queer Abolition, and Trans Resistance,” Eric A. Stanley, “Building an Abolitionist Trans & Queer Movement with Everything We’ve Got,” Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, “Brushes with Lily Law,” Tommi Avicolli Mecca, “‘Rounding Up the Homosexuals’: The Impact of Juvenile Court on Queer and Trans/Gender-Non-Conforming Youth,” Wesley Ware, “Being an Incarcerated Transperson: Shouldn’t People Care?” Clifton Goring/Candi Raine Sweet, “Transforming Carceral Logics: 10 Reasons to Dismantle the Prison Industrial Complex Using a Queer/Trans Analysis,” S. Lambel, “Maroon Abolitionists: Black Gender-oppressed Activists in the Anti- Prison Movement in the US and Canada,” Julia Sudbury AKA Julia C. Oparah, and “Abolitionist Imaginings: A Conversation with Bo Brown, Reina Gossett, and Dylan Rodríguez,” Che Gossett

**Week Eight (3/25): Theatre and Imprisonment**

Excerpts from *Imagining Medea: Rhodessa Jones and Theater for Incarcerated Women*, ch. 2, Rena Fraden and *We Just Telling Stories*, Cultural Odyssey, Rhodessa Jones (film)

**Week Nine (4/1): Prison Autobiography and Black Power/ Liberation**

**in the United States**

*Assata: An Autobiography, Assata Shakur* and

*Eyes of the Rainbow*, Dir. Gloria Rolando

**Week Ten (4/8): Prison Autobiography, Poetry, and Epistolary in Ireland**

Excerpts from *Tell Them Everything*, Margaretta D’Arcy, *Aiming Higher*, Roseleen Walsh, and Troubles Letters from MairéadFarrell, Ella O’Dwyer, and Martina Anderson

**Spring Break 4/12-4/20**

**Week Eleven (4/22): Peer Review**

**Research Paper Rough Draft Due**

**Argumentative Research Project Proposal Due**

**Week Twelve (4/29): International Survey of Prison Poetry and Autobiography**

Excerpts from *Wall Tappings: An International Anthology of Women’s Prison Writings 200 to the Present*, ed. Judith Scheffler (Blackboard), *A Snake with Ice Water: Prison Writings by South African Women*, ed. Barbara Schreiner*, Voices of Women: Poetry by and about Third World Women*, ed. Women’s International Resource Exchange, *Time Is an Eightball: Poems from Juvenile Homes & the Penitentiary of New Mexico*, ed. Simeon Vilensky, *Dear Somebody: The Prison Poetry*, Norma Stafford, *In Time: Women’s Poetry from Prison*, ed. Rosanna Warren and Teresa Iverson, *Proud Mary: Poems from a Black Sister in Prison*, Ida Mae Tassin, *Rescue the Word: New Poems*, Marilyn Buck, *Insights & Poems*, Huey P. Newton and Ericka Huggins, *Where Eagles Fall*, Lorri Martinez, *A Comrade Is as Precious as a Rice Seedling*, Mila D. Aguilar, *Prison Writing in 20th-Century America*, ed. H. Bruce Franklin, *This Prison Where I Live: The PEN Anthology of Imprisoned Writers*, ed. Siobhan David,and *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, ed., Bell Gale Chevigny

**\*Week Thirteen (5/6): Film**

***Out in the Night*, Dir. Blair Doroschwalther**

**\*Week Fourteen (5/13): Course Wrap-Up**

**Research Paper Final Draft Due**

**Argumentative Research Paper**

**Paper Due: 4/22 (Rough Draft) & 5/13 (Final Draft)**

**Overview**

Research is not a type of essay on its own. Research merely assistsin supporting a central argument. Many of you might feel overwhelmed by information and allow it to outweigh your own ideas. However, you should not rely exclusively on quoted passages. Instead, you should develop your own ideas and reasons. Your goal is not to string information together, but rather to write a coherent, argumentative essay—one that embodies your ideas about three scholarly peer-reviewed articles you find independently to support your ideas. You may wish to write an initial draft before you incorporate research, and then supplement your ideas with the information you have found and synthesized. You should research a prison studies issue that connects to race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, religion, and age, etc. (i.e., trans women being forced to detransition and relocate to men’s prisons.) about which you wish to know more. If you care about your topic, your essay will be easier for you to write. Must use scholarly peer-reviewed articles. Your data should come from the library journals or databases. Your sources should have an author, journal title, volume, issue, and year. You should not use newspaper articles or magazine articles, unless they are supplemental and related to current events. You also can use books and documentaries as supplemental sources. You must be able to examine scholarly journal articles and determine their relevance to your paper. You must develop your own ideas and topics, follow your beliefs and passions, and strengthen your ideas with outside sources. You may pick any issue related to the course focus, prison, human rights, and gender, to research so long as you three scholarly peer-reviewed articles, make your own arguments, and provide several reasons for your arguments. For instance, you may discuss strip-searching in the Six Counties in Ireland. You may argue the prevalence of psychological and sexual torture is a form of institutional violence and social control. You should get assistance from librarians and come to me for help as you begin to work on your projects. All projects must be revised and proofread before handed in.If you plagiarize, the project will receive a failing grade. Your project must be 15-20 pages. You should submit all drafts and peer reviews. It comprises 40% of your grade. Your paper should be double-spaced, have one inch margins all around, be 12 point Times New Roman font, and have a proper heading with your full name, my full name, the title and section of the course, the date, and a title.

**Grading Checklist**

•This project has a clear argumentative statement. Each body paragraph raises a supporting point. Each body paragraph has a topic sentence that clearly encapsulates the point of the paragraph and connects it to the central argument.

•The research is smoothly incorporated into your project. Nothing seems to have been forced in arbitrarily. All quotes need to be introduced, explained, and connected to support the topic.

•Every piece of information has a clear citation within the text. You have not plagiarized.

•There is a Works Cited page that is formatted according to MLA or other citation rules.

•The project has been proofread for errors.

You should submit all drafts and peer reviews.

**Grading Checklist**

•You should write an introduction that has a strong hook or captivating opening (i.e., quote, anecdote, or question).

• You should synthesize your central arguments and main ideas.

• You should write in a professional tone by removing or revising personal experiences and reflections. Instead, you should focus on social and cultural commentary about the texts for your body/ middle paragraphs.

• You should save passages from the texts you enjoyed and used in your journals, yet locate additional passages that further support your critical insights.

• You should explain and analyze why the passages you chose are important. You should support your claims by adding additional topic paragraphs.

•You should smoothly incorporate the article into your critical analysis. All quotes need to be introduced, explained, and connected to support the topic.

•You should have a clear citation within the text. You should not have plagiarized.

•You should have a Works Cited page that is in MLA for another citation format.

• You should include a conclusion that neither summarizes your introduction nor includes topics that you did not discuss in your essay.

•You should develop and organize your sentences and paragraphs coherently, with clear topic sentences, a clear focus, and strong examples.

•You should revise your essay and eliminate any grammatical and mechanical errors.

**Citation­­ Guide**

•Remember to include all drafts.

•Remember to include a proper heading.

•Remember to craft a creative title. (i.e., “Argumentative Research Paper” and “Rape in Prison” are not creative).

•Remember to do parenthetical references in MLA format. For instance, according to MLA format, all references should have the author and the page from which you are citing in parentheses followed by a period. For instance, Jane says,

“. . .” (Doe 56). If “Doe” is in a sentence, just write the page number. For instance, Doe writes, “. . .” (56).

•Remember a passage that is more than four lines long needs to be indented.

•Remember that periods and commas always go in quotes and that only quotes within quotes have single quotes.

•Remember to do a Works Cited page. No secondary sources are required, but if you wish to use them, you can do so.

For a book, the MLA citation is:

Brady, Evelyn et al. *In the Footsteps of Anne: Stories of Republican Women*

*Ex-Prisoners*. Belfast: Shanway Press, 2011.

For an article in a book, the MLA citation is:

James, Joy. “Framing the Panther: Assata Shakur and Black Female Agency.”

*Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle*. Ed. David F. Gore, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard. New York: New York University Press, 2009. 138-160.

For a journal article, the MLA citation is:

Butler, Judith. “Critique, Dissent, Disciplinarity.” *Critical Inquiry*. 35.4. (Summer

2009): 773-795.

For a website, the MLA citation is:

Goodman, Amy. “Deportations Continue Despite Review of Immigrants with

Family Ties.” *Democracy Now!* 7 June 2012. Headlines. <www.democracynow.org>.