

Syllabus: Beyond Prisons and Punishment CERS 4472

Starr King School of the Ministry

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Course Overview:

This course will be a general overview of the criminal justice system, with particular attention to prison ministry and new justice paradigms such as restorative/transformational justice. It will look deeply at the systemic issues imbedded in punishment-based social policy; examine ethical and theological issues, as well as the possibilities for social change. The impact on under classes and people of color will be a special focus. The courses will expose the roots of retributive justice in slavery, Jim Crow, and the related militarization of Southern culture, economics, and other societal systems.

Course Requirements:

1. Students are expected to attend all classes, read all materials, and be prepared to participate fully.
2. Three reflection papers will be due in the course of the semester to provide opportunities for students to reflect on the readings and discussions, 3-5 pages each.
3. In addition to the required reading, students will select one book from the list of restorative justice titles and work in teams with others who select the same book to present the material to the class.
4. Each student will do one of the following: Write an in-depth paper on a program, or paradigm that demonstrates the principles of restorative/transformational justice developed in the course. The paper will be 15-20 pages and will be due on the last day of class. Alternatively students can volunteer in a community program that practices these principles and write a 5-7 page description of their work and their assessment of how the program fits restorative principles. Topics for the research paper or community service will be negotiated with the professors prior to the Spring break.

Required Readings: Beyond Prisons: A New Interfaith Paradigm for Our Failed Prison System, by Laura Magnani and Harmon Wray, Fortress Press: Minneapolis MN, 2006, ISBN 800638328, \$15.00; The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness, by Michelle Alexander, The New Press: New York and London, 2010, ISBN 1595581037, \$27.95; Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic, by James Gilligan, M.D., Vintage Books, A Division of Random House: New York, 1996, ISBN 679779124, \$15.95, and **one from the following list** of restorative justice choices: Ambassadors of Reconciliation, Vol. I or II New Testament Reflections on Restorative Justice and Peacemaking, by Ched Myers and Elaine Enns, Orbis Books, 2009, ISBN 1570758317, \$16.00 each, Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice, Penguin Press: Canada, 2006, ISBN 9780143055594, \$22.00, Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice, 3rd edition, Herald Press: Scottsdale, PA, 2005, by Howard Zehr, ISBN 836135121, \$15.99.

Syllabus

Wednesday Feb. 2, 2011 Introduction of subject, professors, and of class to one another. History of the penitentiary, its religious roots. Overview of topics to be covered and expectations. Definitions. Concentric circles on punishment.

Feb. 9, Contextualizing the history and development of prisons in the context of slavery in the U.S. Wilson Riles presenting. Read pp 1-42 in Beyond Prisons and pp 1-57 in The New Jim Crow.

Feb.16, The dynamics of crime and punishment and the adversarial system. Conditions of confinement. Dialogue between Riles and Magnani. Read chapters 4 &5 in Beyond Prisons and chapters 2 & 3 in The New Jim Crow. **First Reflection Paper Due.**

Feb. 23, The death penalty and the Racial Justice Act in California. Guest speakers. Read chapter 4 of The New Jim Crow and the Prologue and Part I of Violence.

March 2, Women, LGBT, transgender and gender variant prisoners. Film: Cruel and Unusual about the experience of five transgender women in prisons around the country. Review pp 115-119 in Beyond Prisons, read pp 173-248 in The New Jim Crow.

March 9, Youth and the Juvenile System. Possible guests. . Read chapter 6 in Beyond Prisons. **Second Reflection Paper Due.**

March 16, Survivors – How do victims and family members survive violent crime? Special guests. (Please make every effort to be present for this class). Read the Part II of Violence.

March 23 – No class- Spring Break

March 30 Prison Chaplaincy: Pastorally, Practically, Ethically. Guest speakers. Review Beyond Prisons, pp 132-136, plus read chapters 7 &8.

April 6, Defining Restorative Justice – what it is and what it isn't. Begin reading book of choice and working with reading groups. **Third Reflection Paper due.**

April 13, How does healing happen? Sharing models/stories of healing. What is the role of the state? Continue reading selected books. Small reading groups meet.

April 20, Re-entry, Parole, Getting on With Life. Guest speakers.

April 27 – May 11, Reading Group presentations. Sharing what we are learning from community service and research papers.

May 18 – Last Class. Final Papers Due. How does social change happen? Wrapping up loose ends. Great Turning Exercise.

