

HIS 366
Carceral Studies: Histories of Policing, Prisons, and Surveillance

Satisfies: DIV, SBS+

Thematic Categories: “Empires, Violence & Global Connections,”
“Law, Politics & Social Justice,” “Race, Religion, Gender & Sexualities”

M/W, 2:00 – 3:20 PM

Professor Robert Chase

With 2.2 million people in prison and nearly 6.5 million people under the auspices of the criminal justice system (via probation or parole), the United States, which has only 5 percent of the world's general population, now imprisons twenty five percent of the world's prison population. How did the United States come to have the world's highest rate of incarceration and one so sharply racially disproportionate? This course traces the development of what some have termed the 'New Jim Crow' and a 'prison empire' by viewing American history through the lens of race, crime, punishment policing, and prisons. By studying the history of American criminality and ideas concerning punishment and policing, students will consider two distinct periods of prison reform: 1) the Progressive era of “scientific treatment” and the “new penology”; 2) the post-World War II focus on the rehabilitative and therapeutic ideal. The course will also focus on periods of reaction, revolt, and retrenchment and how the American prison has shaped racial formation, particularly the development of convict labor in the New South; the prison uprisings of the 1920s, 1950s, and 1970s; the rhetoric of “law and order” America and the “war on drugs” in the post-Civil Rights era; and the massive prison building project of our own time.