

Lakehead

UNIVERSITY

POLI/CRIM 4113 WAO The Politics of Incarceration/W2026

Instructor: Dr. Todd R. Stubbs

Class Times: Friday 2:30-5:30, OA 2010

Office/Hours: Friday 12:00-1:00, or by appointment.

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Course Description

How do political societies rationalize and implement carceral regimes – systems of control, surveillance, punishment, and rehabilitation of criminal offenders? What is the scope of a carceral regime? Does it start and end at the justice system and the prison, or does it extend further into the social body? What gave rise to current approaches to regulating, controlling, surveilling, and rehabilitating offenders and what political priorities do these techniques represent and actualize? How can we devise a more just carceral system? This course explores these and other related questions about our current – and past – carceral regimes. In so doing, the analysis focuses on the politics of incarceration in democratic societies. We consider theoretical and historical explanations for the birth and widespread expansion of the prison, taking in its connection to the emergence of successive political orders and its place in contemporary political discourse and debate.

Course Outcomes

In POLI 4113, students will develop their skills at assimilating and discussing challenging scholarly agendas and debates. An emphasis is placed on active and committed engagement with the scheduled materials and related topics. Student will hone high level critical reading, research, and writing competencies through discussion, presentation, and in-depth research.

Mandatory Reading Materials

All assigned readings are available either on D2L under Content > Articles or linked in the syllabus to online sources. Be sure to check the syllabus regularly to ensure you complete the required readings before class.

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation: 20%

Research Paper Proposal: 25%

Proposal Presentation: 20%

Research Essay: 35%

Course Structure and Work Requirements

Course Structure:

This course takes place on campus once weekly, for a three-hour session. It is a seminar course with the major emphasis placed on discussion of the posted materials and student presentations. From time-to-time, there will be brief lectures introducing weekly topics and core themes; however, PowerPoint lectures will not be posted (should they wish, students are encouraged to take notes). A dominant throughline connecting the weekly meetings is a stepwise process of identifying, planning, proposing, workshopping, and – finally – writing a major research paper on a self-selected topic related to the course. A Desire2Learn site is available featuring course materials, including readings, assignment guidelines, and student grades.

Evaluated Work:

1. Attendance and Participation (20%)

Participation in this course will cover your attendance and regular participation in all class discussions. The participation score will also appraise students' evident preparation for class, familiarity with the posted reading materials, and willingness to participate in discussion following peer presentations.

2. Research Proposal (20%)

Due 30 January 2026

Length: between 900 to 1,000 words.

The purpose of the proposal is to provide to the instructor, for the instructor's approval, a well-worked-out plan for the culminating Research Essay. The proposal feedback will focus on the quality of the critical approach (research question and hypothesis), preliminary sources, and literature summary, in addition to the quality of the overall composition.

The Research Proposal will feature the following three major elements:

- a) clearly enunciate the core topic and related themes with reference to relevant authoritative sources;
- b) and identify a preliminary (i.e., subject to change) research question and hypothesis; and
- c) include a preliminary annotated bibliography with five sources.

Detailed guidelines with a list of suggested topics will be posted on D2L.

3. Proposal Presentation (20%)

Each student will deliver a 15-minute presentation on their chosen research topic (see Research Proposal, above, and Research Paper, below). A successful presentation will clearly enunciate the core topic and related themes; identify and summarize relevant scholarly sources; and identify a preliminary research question and hypothesis, as in the proposal.

A ten-to-fifteen-minute class discussion will follow each presentation with the purpose of helping the presenter clarify their ideas and providing suggestions for improvement.

IMPORTANT: the major emphasis in this exercise should be placed on eliciting peer feedback. Thus, having a pre-prepared question or two to prompt discussion is strongly advised.

4. Research Essay (30%)

Due 27 March 2026

Length: 3,250 to 3,500 words

Source minimum: 15 scholarly publications (articles or books)

The Research Essay will comprise a full critical analysis of the topic identified in the Research Presentation and Research Proposal. The paper should feature the following elements:

- a) a title page with an original title, the author's name, the course code, the instructor's name, and the date;
- b) an abstract briefly summarizing the topic, methodology, and major finding(s)
- c) an introduction;
- d) a literature review section;
- e) a findings section;
- f) a conclusion;
- g) and a bibliography.

Evaluation Standards for Written Assignments/Projects:

80-100% (A range):

Shows advanced competency in meeting the research and/or analytical and/or communications and/or cognitive and/or technical requirements of the assignment.

- The work is of exceptional quality
- The work is insightful, detailed, articulate, grammatically correct, technically correct, and well organized

70-79% (B range):

Exhibits a good effort in meeting the requirements of the assignment or examination.

- The work may be less focused, detailed, organized or less widely researched than a paper worthy of a higher grade or communicates fewer ideas with less detailed analysis than an assignment worthy of a higher grade

60-69% (C range):

Average approach and level of success in communicating analysis, factual material, and ideas.

- The work offers less detailed analysis and/or a lack sufficient research, and /or a less articulate or less clearly focused argument and/or may have technical flaws

50-59% (D range):

A poor level of competency in meeting the requirements of an assignment or examination.

- The work is poorly organized and/or written, features generalized statements, lacks supporting details and/or critical analysis, and features significant technical flaws

Below 50% (F):

Failure to meet the requirements of the assignment.

Course Policies**Late Assignments:**

All written work must be handed in on time. Late work will be penalized 2% per day, including weekends and holidays. Late assignments may not be accepted after more than ten days. To obtain an exemption for medical or compassionate reasons, students must present signed supporting documentation.

IMPORTANT: Unsubstantiated technical problems or electronic submission of blank files or otherwise unreadable files are not legitimate excuses for late penalty exemption.

AI policy: The use of generative AI to interpret texts and generate prose is not permitted for any written work submitted for credit in this course. The rationale is simple: 1) the student who uses generative AI to substitute for the effort of reading and producing independent writing does not learn to interpret texts proficiently or write at a university level; 2) it is a flagrant waste of the instructor's time and effort to grade papers produced by a machine; and 3) it is academically dishonest to pass off work completed by a third party as one's own. 5 In cases of suspected use of AI to substitute for independent writing and reading, the instructor reserves the right to refuse to assign a grade to the paper, since it is not the student's work. In addition, by attempting to receive credit for work that is not their own, students who violate the course AI policy should expect their case to be referred to the department head and the faculty dean, where further penalties may be imposed.

IMPORTANT: since Grammarly now uses generative AI, it is not permitted for use in this course.

For more information on the University's AI policy see

<https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct/academic-integrity/chatgpt-ai-tools>

Academic Misconduct:

Lakehead University's policy on academic misconduct can be found in the online Course Calendar.

See <https://www.lakeheadu.ca/students/student-life/student-conduct/academic-integrity>

A copy of the "Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures" including sections on plagiarism and other forms of misconduct may also be obtained from the Office of the Registrar. The following rules shall govern the treatment of candidates who have been found guilty of attempting to obtain academic credit dishonestly.

- The minimum penalty for a candidate found guilty of plagiarism, or of cheating on any part of a course will be a zero for the work concerned.
- A candidate found guilty of cheating on a formal examination or a test, or of serious or repeated plagiarism, or of unofficially obtaining a copy of an examination paper before the examination is scheduled to be written, will receive zero for the course and may be expelled from the University.
- Students disciplined under the Code of Student Behaviour and Disciplinary Procedures may appeal their case through the Judicial Panel.

Note: "Plagiarism" shall be deemed to include:

- Plagiarism of ideas as where an idea of an author or speaker is incorporated into the body of an assignment as though it were the writer's idea, i.e. no credit is given the person through referencing or footnoting or endnoting.
- Plagiarism of words occurs when phrases, sentences, tables or illustrations of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a writer's own, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on the format followed) are present but referencing or footnoting or endnoting is given.
- Plagiarism of ideas and words as where words and an idea(s) of an author or speaker are incorporated into the body of a written assignment as though they were the writer's own words and ideas, i.e. no quotations or indentations (depending on format followed) are present and no referencing or footnoting or endnoting is given."

Due Dates and Weekly Schedule

Due Dates

Research Proposal: 30 January 2026

Research Essay: 27 March 2026

All due dates are valid to 11:59 pm on the specified day. All written assignments must be submitted electronically to the appropriate D2L drop box in pdf or .doc (Word) format. Please do not submit in any other file format.

Both written assignments in this class must be uploaded to D2L with an accompanying signed and dated Declaration of Academic Integrity (DAI). Papers will not be graded unless they are accompanied by a DAI.

Weekly Schedule

9 January

Week 1 – Introduction/The Scope of Analysis: Incarceration as a Political Problem

Richard Sparks, “Can Prisons Be Legitimate? Penal Politics, Privatization, and the Timeliness of an Old Idea,” *The British Journal of Criminology* 34 (1994): 14-28.

Part I: Historical and Theoretical Problems: The Foucauldian Framework

16 January

Week 2 – The Corporal: Torture, Training, Administration

Michel Foucault, “The Body of the Condemned,” in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Vintage, 1995 [1977]), 3-31.

Marie Gottschalk, “The Power to Punish and Execute: The Political Development of Capital Punishment, 1972 to Today” in *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge University Press, 2006).
<https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lakeheadu.ca/lib/lakehead-ebooks/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=268259>

David Garland, “The Problem of the Body in Modern State Punishment,” *Social Research* 78, 3 (FALL 2011): 767-798.

23 January

Week 3 – The Carceral: The Prison

Michel Foucault, “Panopticism,” in *Discipline & Punish* (1995 [1977]).

Sara M. Benson, “The Architecture of Liberalism and the Origins of Carceral Democracy,” in *The Prison of Democracy: Race, Leavenworth, and the Culture of Law* (University of California Press, 2019).

Michael Weinrath, “The Effect of Policy, Architecture, and Technology,” in *Behind the Walls: Inmates and Correctional Officers on the State of Canadian Prisons* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016).

30 January**Research Proposal due 30 January 2026**Week 4 – Regimes: Carceral State, Carceral Society

Andrew Johnson, “Foucault: Critical Theory of the Police in a Neoliberal Age,” *Theoria: A Journal of Social and Political Theory* 61, 141 (December 2014): 5-29.

Kelly Lytle Hernández, Khalil Gibran Muhammad and Heather Ann Thompson, “Introduction: Constructing the Carceral State,” *The Journal of American History* 102, 1, Historians and the Carceral State (June 2015): 18-24.

Marie Gottschalk, “Introduction: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics,” in *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Part II: The Politics of Prisons**6 February**Week 5 – The Prison in Settler Societies: A Comparative Analysis

Julie Stubbs, “Indigenous Women in Australian Criminal Justice: Over-Represented but Rarely Acknowledged,” *Australian Indigenous Law Review* 15, 1 (2011): 47-63.

Laura C. L. Landertinger, “Settler Colonialism and Carceral Control of Indigenous Mothers and their Children: Child Welfare and the Prison System,” in Joanne Minaker and Bryan Hogeveen, eds., *Criminalized Mothers, Criminalizing Mothering* (Demeter Press, 2015).

Presentations

13 FebruaryWeek 6 – The Prison in Democratic Societies: Statistics, Crime, and Incarceration

Rainer Diaz-Bone, “Statistical Panopticism and Its Critique,” *Historical Social Research / Historische Sozialforschung* 44, 2 ((2019): 77-102.

Joyce White Vance, “The Desired Outcome of the Federal Criminal Justice System,” *Federal Sentencing Reporter* 30, 3 (February 2018): 171-176.

Presentations

(Winter Study Break, 16-20 February)

27 February**Week 7 – The Prison in Capitalist Societies: The Business of Prisons**

Gregory Hooks et al., “The Prison Industry: Carceral Expansion and Employment in U.S. Counties, 1969-1994,” *Social Science Quarterly* 85, 1 (MARCH 2004): 37-57.

Heather Ann Thompson, “The Prison Industrial Complex: A Growth Industry in a Shrinking Economy,” *New Labor Forum* 21, 3 (Fall 2012): 38-47.

Presentations

6 March**Week 8 – Prison and Race: “Racial Disparities” and the “Tough-on-Crime” Agenda**

Marie Gottschalk, “Is Mass Incarceration the ‘New Jim Crow?’” in *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Kali Nicole Gross, “African American Women, Mass Incarceration, and the Politics of Protection,” *The Journal of American History* 102, 1, Historians and the Carceral State (June 2015): 25-33.

Presentations

13 March**Week 9 – SOGI Issues, Prisons, and Detention Centres**

Russell K. Robinson, “Masculinity as Prison: Sexual Identity, Race, and Incarceration,” *California Law Review* 99, 5 (October 2011): 1309-1408.

Sarah Singer “‘How much of a lesbian are you?’ Experiences of LGBT Asylum Seekers in Immigration Detention in the UK,” in Richard C. M. Mole, ed., *Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe* (UCL Press, 2021).

Presentations

20 March**Week 10 – The Criminalization of Immigration and Poverty**

Marie Gottschalk, “Catch and Keep: The Criminalization of Immigrants,” in *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015).

Manning Marable, “Incarceration vs. Education: Reproducing Racism and Poverty in America,” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 15, 2 (Fall 2008): 59-61.

27 March

Research Essay Due 27 March 2026

Week 11 – The End of the Carceral State?

Marie Gottschalk, “Razing the Carceral State,” *Social Justice* 42, 2 (2015): 31-51.

James B. Jacobs, “Finding Alternatives to the Carceral State,” *Social Research* 74, 2 (SUMMER 2007): 695-699.

3 April**Week 12 – Course Wrap-Up**

(End)