

Learning Injustice: The School-to-Prison Pipeline



Photo Credit: Student Rights Alliance

Professor

Marisol LeBrón / lebronm@dickinson.edu

Time and Location

MWF 11:30am – 12:20pm
Denny 212

Office Hours

Thursday 12:30pm – 2:30pm
Denny Hall 302

Liaison Librarian

Malinda Triller / trillerm@dickinson.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Schools figure as incredibly important spaces of opportunity, development, and affirmation in the American imaginary. However, for many marginalized students – students of color, low-income students, students with disabilities, undocumented students, and LGBTQ students – schools can become sites of stigmatization, physical abuse, and humiliation rather than spaces of empowerment. Particularly concerning are the ways that school officials participate in the criminalization of marginalized students in ways that expose them to the criminal justice system at an early age. This is known as the school-to-prison pipeline. This course will examine the social, political, and historical factors that have contributed to the growth of the school-to-prison pipeline in the United States. Using a range of sources, from academic texts to policy reports to films, we will discuss how students have been harmed by the proliferation of law enforcement personnel and zero tolerance disciplinary policies in schools. Ultimately, students in this course will both understand how the school-to-prison pipeline is a manifestation of structural inequalities in our society and explore through writing assignments what can be done to stop the flow of young people into spaces of incarceration.

LEARNING GOALS

The First-Year Seminar (FYS) introduces students to Dickinson as a “community of inquiry” by developing habits of mind essential to liberal learning. Through the study of a compelling issue or broad topic chosen by their faculty member, students will:

- critically analyze information and ideas in the texts we discuss
- examine issues from multiple perspectives
- discuss, debate, and defend ideas, including one’s own views, with clarity and reason
- learn to find, evaluate, and correctly incorporate outside sources so as to avoid plagiarism
- create clear academic writing

COURSE MATERIALS

Carla Shedd, *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2015).

Crystal T. Laura, *Being Bad: My Baby Brother and the School-to-Prison Pipeline* (Teachers College Press, 2014).

Jerry Flores, *Caught Up: Girls, Surveillance, and Wraparound Incarceration* (University of California Press, 2016).

Victor Rios, *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys* (NYU Press, 2011).

All other readings for this course will be available through Moodle [marked *]. You are expected to bring these readings to class. If you are having issues purchasing the books for class, please come speak to me.

EXPECTATIONS

During our time together, you will engage in discussion-based intellectual exchange with your fellow classmates and rigorous, original analysis of the weekly readings. Our class sessions will help you to develop critical thinking capacities that will prove indispensable both in the classroom and beyond.

We are collectively responsible for the quality of our time together. In other words, you will get out of this class what you invest in terms of preparedness and effort. Therefore, you are expected to arrive to each session on time, having read the assigned material, having determined relevant questions and points for discussion, and ready to engage each other respectfully in the classroom.

A NOTE ON DIFFERENCE, DISCOMFORT, & RESPECT IN THE CLASSROOM

Respect for difference, in all its forms, is essential to building a classroom environment where everyone feels able to learn and contribute to class discussions. The material covered in this course will engage with questions of how difference produces distinct forms of knowledge and diverse experiences. The experiences and ways of knowing discussed in the course materials may be similar or different from your own experiences, both of which can result in questions and possibly even feelings of discomfort. When these moments arise, I encourage you to view them as valuable and important components of learning.

Thus, this course will ask you to think critically and thoughtfully about social differences and societal inequalities in ways that may expand or challenge previously held ideas. That said, the goal of this class is not to “force” certain ways of thinking onto anyone, but, rather, to expose everyone to ways of thinking and being in the world that may or may not be different from their own. I expect and encourage students to disagree with the course material, fellow classmates, and me; however, I expect that everyone will remain respectful and willing to listen at all times. Although you are under no obligation to agree with the course materials, the instructor, or the other students, you are still responsible for displaying a comprehension of the texts assigned and the conversations taking place.

If you have concerns about course content or the expectations regarding the classroom environment, please consult with me during the first week to determine whether this class is a good fit for you. If you are uncomfortable with or uninterested in discussions of race, gender, sexuality, class, histories of colonization, exploitation, capitalism, and violence, this class may not be for you as these will be central themes covered throughout the semester.

COMMUNICATION

Email: You are welcome to email me with any questions or concerns. I expect, however, that you be timely and considerate with your emails. Requests or questions related to scheduled assignments that are received less than 12 hours before the assignment is due may not receive a response. Please be professional in your email communications with all your professors, including me. Consult the following rules on how to email your professors: <http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/professors-guide/2010/09/30/18-etiquette-tips-for-e-mailing-your-professor>

Office Hours: Do not hesitate to come see me if you have any questions regarding the course materials or your written work. If you are unable to attend my scheduled office hours, contact me to set up another time by appointment.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION

Attendance at all classes is required. Students will be allowed *two* absences without penalty. All other absences will lower your participation grade for the course. ***Students with 5 or more absences will automatically receive a ZERO participation grade for the course.*** Students are expected to arrive to class on time; students arriving to class more than 15 minutes after the class has started will be marked absent for the day.

If an extenuating circumstance requires that you be late or miss a class session, please consult with me ahead of time. Please note that, in addition to contacting me, it is *YOUR* personal responsibility to attain and review notes for any missed classes from your fellow students.

You are expected to attend every class and be fully present in our collective space. Therefore, ***cell phones must be put on silent and remain out of sight. Additionally, all laptops, iPads, tablets, and digital notebooks are prohibited in class,*** unless there is a documented need for students who require specific learning accommodations. Because this is a discussion-based class, you will not need to take digital notes. Also, you must remember to bring the readings with you to class in order to appropriately reference and engage them during our discussions.

LATE PAPER POLICY

No Late Papers Will Be Accepted Without Penalty. A FULL letter grade will be deducted for every day that a paper is late (i.e., B+ to C+). Late papers also may not receive written comments. Papers cannot be rewritten. If you are having difficulty with an assignment, please come see me during my office hours.

PAPER FORMAT

All papers must use 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spacing, and 1" margins on all sides. All students must use the following header:

Your name
The class title
The assignment (i.e. Reflection Essay, Comparative Essay, etc.)
The date you handed in the paper (not the due date)

Students should use either Chicago or MLA style citations in a consistent manner throughout their written assignments. For more see the Library's Guide to Citing Sources: <http://libguides.dickinson.edu/citing>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Any breach of academic integrity will not be tolerated and will result in disciplinary review. I expect all students to familiarize themselves with and adhere to Dickinson College's policies regarding academic misconduct, which can be accessed here: <http://www.dickinson.edu/student-life/resources/dean-of-students/content/Conduct---Community-Standards/#Academic Misconduct>

WHAT IS PLAGIARISM?

Plagiarism is the appropriation of someone else's work or ideas – whether they are written or not – without acknowledgement, proper identification of the source, or citation. It is irrelevant whether this was done intentionally or not. Further, a lack of knowledge about U.S. standards of academic citation is not an excuse or explanation. While the most egregious forms of plagiarism use entire phrases, sentences, or paragraphs verbatim without quotation marks or citation, paraphrasing someone else's work without attribution *and* altering a few words to pass someone else's ideas off as your own also constitute equally serious forms of plagiarism. The inclusion of non-textual images (i.e. drawings, maps, graphs, charts, and photos) in a paper is also considered plagiarism if the images are not properly cited.

It is *YOUR* responsibility to consult with your instructor, a librarian, or writing tutor if you are unsure or unclear about how to properly use citations.

For more information about plagiarism, please consult the Purdue Online Writing Lab's webpage dedicated to avoiding plagiarism: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>

NEED HELP WITH WRITING ASSIGNMENTS?

As I am unable to read paper drafts, I strongly recommend visiting the Eberly Writing Center. At the Writing Center, you can work one-on-one with a trained writing tutor. Please avail yourselves of this wonderful resource – you will not regret it. For more information and to make an appointment: http://www.dickinson.edu/info/20158/writing_program/2829/the_norman_m_eberly_multilingual_writing_center

ACCESSIBILITY & ACCOMODATIONS

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to Disability Services in Biddle House. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of Disability Services is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have.

Disability Services proctoring is managed by Susan Frommer, she can be reached at (717)-254-8107 or proctoring@dickinson.edu. Address general inquiries to Stephanie Anderberg at (717)-245-1734 or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu.

NAMES & PRONOUNS

If you prefer to be called by a different name or referred to by a different gender pronoun than the one under which you are officially enrolled, please inform me. Students are expected to respectfully refer to each other by preferred names and pronouns during class discussions.

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

Class Participation: 20%

On-time completion of the reading assignments, active listening during lectures and in-class discussion, and adding to discussions by making comments and asking questions are all required of you in this course.

Essay 1 (Reflection Essay): 15%

What was your experience of elementary, middle, and/or high school? In this essay, reflect on your experience within the educational system and how it is similar to or differs from the accounts we have read in class so far. In writing your essay, it may be helpful to reflect on the following questions:

- What were the class compositions of the schools you attended? Were your schools racially homogenous or heterogeneous? How did the demographics of your school make you feel?
- Were security personnel or police officers fixtures at your school? Did your school have a “zero tolerance” policy for in-school infractions or were disciplinary actions more discretionary taking into account a range of factors? Did you ever notice some students being disciplined more or less than other students?
- How does your own experience relate to the readings? How do the differences or similarities between your own experience and that in the reading make you feel about how education is structured for young people in this country?
- Are there any additional thoughts or issues that your own educational experience brought up that you’d like to discuss?

Your essay is **2-3 pages** and is due on **September 4, 2017**. Do not plan to turn in a complete educational biography. Rather think about the questions mentioned above and others to reflect on your relationship to the structure discussed in the reading and how it has or hasn’t impacted your life. This assignment is important to get you to think about your own *positionality* in relation to the readings and help you to approach the readings in an open and aware manner.

Essay 2 (Comparative Essay): 20%

While many low-income youth in the U.S. are forced to navigate the school-to-prison pipeline, gender plays a large role in how it is experienced. In this essay, you will use Victor R  o’s *Punished* and Jerry Flores’ *Caught Up* in order to discuss how young men and women experience schooling, punishment, surveillance, violence, and incarceration. How are young men and women’s experiences with these structures different and how does that difference relate to gendered understandings and expectations?

Your essay is **4-5 pages** and is due on **October 18, 2017**. You should use examples from the texts (with appropriate citations) in order to support your claims. Do not plan to simply summarize the readings. Rather, you should think about and analyze how the experiences of the young men profiled by Ríos and the young women profiled by Flores relate to each other (how are they similar or different) and how their experiences of both education and punishment are shaped by gendered norms and expectations.

Essay 3 (Film Analysis): 15%

Queer and LGBT young people tend to experience more bullying and harassment in and outside of school from their peers than other young people. This is especially true if they are “out” or are perceived as transgressing sexual and gender norms. Schools not only often fail to protect queer and LGBT youth from bullying, but also tend to criminalize their attempts at self-defense or self-preservation. Further, schools can subject queer and LGBT youth to greater surveillance “for their own protection,” which may increase their exposure to school and police discipline.

In this essay, you will discuss how the school-to-prison pipeline plays a subtle role in the film *Moonlight* (dir. Barry Jenkins). What do Chiron’s experiences in school and after tell us about the difficulties that queer and LGBT youth experience finding support and protection in school? You should draw on (and appropriately cite) the readings from week 11 in order to support your claims and analysis. Your essay is **2-3 pages** and is due on **November 13, 2017**. Please do not simply summarize the film and the readings. Rather, make sure that you are putting the film into conversation with the readings and using the readings to analyze the film and support your own analysis of the film.

Final Project (Group Policy Recommendations): 30%

The final project is an opportunity for you and your classmates to propose solutions to the problems we have been reading about all semester. While it is sometimes easy to diagnose a problem, proposing viable solutions can be much more difficult. As a group, you will write what is known as a **white paper**. White papers outline the scope and impact of a specific problem, identify potential solutions, and provide suggestions for how the government or public might move forward with implementing solutions. You will draw on the readings from the semester in order to write this paper. No additional outside research is necessary.

I will break you into groups early in the semester so that you have ample time to meet with your group outside of class to start planning and working on the final project. Detailed instructions for how to write the white paper will be handed out on **October 27, 2017** and discussed in class. Groups will present their policy recommendations to each other on **November 27 and 29, 2017**. The overwhelming majority of writing should be done *prior* to the in-class presentation. The final project will be **5-7 pages** and will be due on **December 1, 2017**. **NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED – NO EXCEPTIONS. LATE PAPERS WILL RESULT IN AN F ON THE ASSIGNMENT FOR THE ENTIRE GROUP.**

Week One

Thursday, August 24 (10:15 - 11:30 a.m.)

- Introductions and review of syllabus
- *In-class reading and discussion:* Rachel Marie Crane Williams, “The School to Prison Pipeline,” ‘zine produced by Project NIA

Saturday, August 26 (10:15 - 11:30 a.m.)

- Nancy A. Heitzeg, “Criminalizing Education: Zero Tolerance Policies, Police in the Hallways, and the School to Prison Pipeline” *

Week Two

Monday, August 28

- Paul J. Hirschfield, “Preparing for prison?: The criminalization of school discipline in the USA” *

Wednesday, August 30

- Annette Fuentes, “The Schoolhouse as Jailhouse” *

Friday, September 1

- Library visit with Malinda Triller. Meet at the Mermaid at 11:30am.
- ***Complete the library tutorials on Moodle prior to our session*** *

Week Three

Monday, September 4

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Preface and Chapter 1
- **ESSAY ONE DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Wednesday, September 6

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Chapter 2

Friday, September 8

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Chapter 3

Week Four

Monday, September 11

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Chapter 4
- **Deadline to complete the Academic Integrity Tutorial**

Wednesday, September 13

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Chapter 5

Friday, September 15

- Carla Shedd, *Unequal City*, Chapter 6

Week Five

Monday, September 18

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Preface and Chapter 1

Wednesday, September 20

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Chapter 2 and 3

Friday, September 22

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Chapter 4

Week Six

Monday, September 25

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Chapter 5

Wednesday, September 27

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Chapter 6

Friday, September 29

- Victor Ríos, *Punished*, Chapter 7 and Conclusion

Week Seven

Monday, October 2

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Introduction

Wednesday, October 4

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Chapter 1

Friday, October 6

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Chapter 2

Week Eight

Monday, October 9

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Chapter 3

Wednesday, October 11

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Chapter 4

Friday, October 13

- Jerry Flores, *Caught Up*, Chapter 5 and Conclusion

Week Nine

Monday, October 16

- *No class – enjoy!*

Wednesday, October 18

- Crystal T. Laura, *Being Bad*, Preface and Chapters 1-3
- **ESSAY TWO DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Friday, October 20

- Crystal T. Laura, *Being Bad*, Chapters 4-5, Epilogue, and Afterword

Week Ten

Monday, October 23

- Julianne Hing, “Race, Disability and the School-to-Prison Pipeline,” *Colorlines* (May 13, 2014) http://colorlines.com/archives/2014/05/race_disability_and_the_school_to_prison_pipeline.html
- Nekima Levy-Pounds, “Warehousing, Imprisoning, and Labeling Youth “Minorities””*

Wednesday, October 25

- Deanna Adams and Erica Meiners, “Who Wants to be Special? Pathologization and the Preparation of Bodies for Prison”*

Friday, October 27

- Discussion of Final Projects

Week Eleven

Monday, October 30

- GLSEN, “Educational Exclusion: Drop Out, Push Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline among LGBTQ Youth”*

Wednesday, November 1

- Advancement Project, “Power in Partnerships: Building Connections at the Intersections of Racial Justice and LGBTQ Movements to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline”*

Friday, November 3

- Wesley Ware, “‘Rounding Up the Homosexuals’: The Impact of Juvenile Court on Queer and Trans/Gender Non-Conforming Youth”*

Week Twelve

Monday, November 6

- No class. Watch on your own: *Moonlight* (2016), dir. Barry Jenkins
* A copy of the film will be available through the library. The film is also accessible on a variety of streaming platforms.

Wednesday, November 8

- No class – Professor LeBrón at American Studies Association conference

Friday, November 10

- No class – Professor LeBrón at American Studies Association conference

Week Thirteen

Monday, November 13

- Damien Sojoyner, “Changing the Lens: Moving Away from the School to Prison Pipeline”*
- **ESSAY THREE DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**

Wednesday, November 15

- Emilio Lacques-Zapien and Leslie Mendoza, “Youth of Color Fight Back: Transforming Our Communities” *

Friday, November 17

- Erica R. Meiners, “Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline/Building Abolition Futures”*

Week Fourteen:

Monday, November 20

- Group work session and progress check-ins

Wednesday, November 22

- No class – Thanksgiving Break

Friday, November 24

- No class – Thanksgiving Break

Week Fifteen

Monday, November 27

- Presentation of policy solutions

Wednesday, November 29

- Presentation of policy solutions

Friday, December 1

- Reflections and wrapping-up
- **FINAL PROJECTS DUE AT THE START OF CLASS**