

LL 302 Women, Writing and Incarceration

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A Community-Based Service Learning Externship

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School for New Learning -- Loop Campus

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FOR WINTER QUARTER 2005, THIS CLASS WILL BEGIN ONE WEEK LATE, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 12.

Date & Time: Wednesdays 6:00 pm (plus 6 week workshops)

Competencies: L-10 Can reflect on the learning process and methods used in an experiential project.

L-11 Can facilitate creative writing workshops in teams or pairs, with incarcerated women in jails/prisons, and articulate a basic understanding of the prison industry in the United States.

As part of DePaul's overall strategy of advocacy and social justice regarding the U.S. prison industry and criminal justice system, this course is the gateway into the DePaul/School for New Learning's Women, Writing and Incarceration Project, and will provide training for students to facilitate 6-week writing workshops in teams at Cook County Jail, Dwight Correctional Center, Sister House and Grace House transitional residences for formerly incarcerated women.

Because of the nature of working with institutions of incarceration or post-incarceration, this class requires a substantial commitment of time and energy. All but those facilitating the Grace and Sister House workshops will need to go through security clearance procedures, for example, which may involve having to take ½ to 1 day from work. This will all be worth your while, however. Not only will you have the unforgettable experience of encountering warm, creative women, but you will also be getting to know your class members in profound ways as we struggle together through the issues that arise in our readings, in the media, and in our work in the jail, transitional facilities, and prisons.

General Outcomes:

- An understanding of the prison industrial complex and its impact on women
- Development of teamwork and facilitation skills

- Familiarity with some literary and social texts that relate to incarceration
- An understanding of the role of advocacy, activism, and the arts, particularly as it pertains to the issues of incarceration and justice
- Enhanced critical thinking
- Increased facility in reflection

Requirements:

This is more than a course. Because of the professional and collaborative nature of the project, it will be imperative that you show up for all training sessions and for all of the workshops. If you must miss a training session, see me ahead of time. **Failure to show up at your workshop without making arrangements with your team members and me ahead of time may result in dismissal from the course.**

While the community work will constitute a great portion of your learning, you will demonstrate that learning through a written, typed, journal. Each week, you will hand in **2-3 pages (typed, double spaced 10 or 12 pt. font)** of reflection, **answering all of the questions and following the format I have provided in each section of the syllabus.** You will also hand in a **self-reporting form** in which you account for your part of work on the team (I'll hand those out mid- and end-of-quarter).

Let me make myself clear:

- Weekly 2-3 page journal entry in which you follow the instructions provided on the syllabus *or*, in the event that I decide to update the assignment, whatever is in the updated assignment for that week (which will be on a handout). How should those journal entries look?
 - Typed
 - Double Spaced
 - Ten or Twelve Point Font
 - Numbered pages with your name on each page
 - Thorough and interesting
 - They should look current, as in *weekly*.

As you move into your 6 week writing workshop, you will find that the 3-part Reflection format allows you to take field notes (observation), reflect on yourself as a learner, and synthesize what you have seen and done with your reflections and the course readings and concepts (generalizations).

By the end of the quarter, you should have 20-30 pages of typed observations, reflections, and commentary. I will be looking for detail, thoughtfulness, reflection, and integration of the course materials with the experiences you have at your site and the ideas/questions these experiences generate. If you don't have these, you may end up with an "R" grade for Externship and I don't want to have to do that, so please do stay current with this.

Texts:

- Chevigny, Bell Gayle. Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing
- Rierdan, Andi. The Farm: Life Inside a Woman's Prison
- Handouts (possibly on Blackboard)

Structure:

- In-Class time (first 4 weeks consist of training and orientation to issues of women and incarceration; second 6 weeks consist of mix of class time and workshop time—see schedule for full details). All classes meet for 3 hours.
 - Reflection and de-briefing from on-site workshops
 - Discussion of readings (history, theory of incarceration, prison literature)
 - Discussion of strategies for social change
 - Visits from community activists and formerly incarcerated women
 - Journal and reading assignments

- Off-Campus time (weekly 1 ½ hour workshops on-site, plus travel time, plus typing time)
 - 2-3 pp reflective/observational journal each week, reading assignments
 - End-of-quarter reading/celebration on-site

Schedule

Week 1: *Introduction & Training Workshop*

- Ice-breaker/Introduction exercises
- Course overview: Integrating externship competencies with the course content and activities
- Description of sites & sign-up
- Clearance forms for IDOC and CCDOC
- Steans CBSL Forms
- Professionalism
- Who/What is an incarcerated woman?

Journal Assignment: (Answer Both Questions)

- ✓ We are all biased, and especially about things with which we are unfamiliar. In this entry, I'd like you to begin by writing about your biases—those things that are a bit hidden from yourself perhaps and so those things that will take some probing—about the women you will be encountering in the workshops. Don't judge or belittle yourself. Everyone has biases about something. This is a learning exercise. Unexamined bias is bias that will never change.
- ✓ Next, write about what you imagine the women's biases about you might be. This is only imaginary, since you can't possibly know what is in their minds (and of course, for as many women as you encounter, there will be as many different ideas and biases), but try to make an imaginative leap and write in the position of an incarcerated woman and what her preconceptions and biases about you might be.

Reading Assignments:

1. Chevigny
 1. "Introduction: Doing Time at Century's End" (xii-xxx)
 2. "Arrival," Judee Norton, (22-23)
 3. "Prison Letter," M. A. Jones (4)
2. Go over materials in the Training Manual

Week 2:

Training, continued

- Discussion of readings
 - ✓ Vocabulary and points to consider in literature discussions
- What is a poem?
- Mock poetry workshop
- Overview of facilitating poetry workshops
- A brief history of the Prison Industry

Journal Assignment: (Answer both questions)

- ✓ Write about class tonight. What struck you as especially illuminating or troubling? Why? What happened? What did you see? What did you learn

about yourself? What did you learn about your biases? What did you learn about your assumptions?

- ✓ Choose a poem or story from the Chevigny collection. Write about the following:
 - What strikes you about this story (i.e. why did you choose this one)?
 - In no more than one short paragraph, what is it about?
 - Significance of title?
 - What did you learn from the poem/story?
 - Why? How? (eg, was it a character's interaction with someone? Was it the detail? The plot? etc.)
 - Any other comments you'd like to make?

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny,
 - "Killing Time," Roger Jaco
 - "The Manipulation Game," Diane Hamill Metzger

Week 3:

Training, continued

- Discussion of statistical material in Facilitator's Manual
- Mini-poetry workshop simulation—small groups with different leaders in each group
- De-briefing and re-do with different leaders
- Discussion of readings
- Group "quiz" on training manual

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ Write about class tonight. How did the simulations work for you? What were your areas of confidence? Where did you feel challenged or insecure? How did your team function?
- ✓ Choose one poem from "Routines & Ruptures" in Chevigny and write first about its overall theme(s). Then, write about how the poet conveyed her or his meaning—word choices, line breaks, emphasis, form, title, speaker, and/or tone—whatever seems to you important to the method behind the poem.
- ✓ How are you feeling about your competence as a poetry workshop facilitator? What areas do you need help with? Where are you confident?

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny,
 - "Letters Come to Prison," Jimmy Santiago Baca (50)
 - "After Lights Out," Barbara Saunders" (52-53)
 - "The Night the Owl Interrupted," Daniel Rosebloom (68-70)

Week 4:

Training, continued

- Workshop simulation (different leaders)
- Trouble shooting and role playing
- Boundaries and Burn Out
- Site logistics and ground rules
- Workshop supply boxes
- Overview of resources—how to use them, add to them, share the wealth

- Literature discussion
- Wrap of training, Stage I; questions, sending-forth

Journal Assignment: (Answer both questions, one page each)

- ✓ **Part I** After looking over the statistics and facts in the beginning pages of your handbook, ask yourselves if any of the readings you have read thus far provide examples or give “flesh” to any of those facts. Please write a page, giving specific examples from the readings and the facts/stats.
- ✓ **Part II** In what ways (if any) has this Externship project pushed you as a learner thus far? What have been your challenges? Be specific. If you have not had any challenges, think about why that might be. How might you incorporate some learning challenges into this experience for yourself?

Reading Assignment:

1. Rierdon, read first half of the book.

- Week 5: On-site Workshops Begin (1 ½ hours) + Wednesday Class
- De-briefing from workshops/problem-solving
 - Discussion of literature
 - Workshop tips
 - Team planning time

Journal Assignment: This is a 3-part reflection and we’ll go over it in class, with examples from former students

- ✓ 1. Accurate observation for specificity and objectivity:
(Use regular font) What happened?
What did you see?
What did you do?
- 2. Opportunity to learn about yourself as a learner.
(Use **bold font**) **What did you learn about yourself?**
What did you learn about your biases?
What did you learn about your assumptions?
- 3. Intellectual analysis
(Use *italics font*)
How do you understand #1 and #2 using the course readings and concepts we’ve been discussing in class so far?

Reading Assignment: finish reading Rierdan.

- Week 6: *On-site Workshops (1 ½ hours)*
NO CLASS MEETING THIS WEEK

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ Do the same 3-part Reflection as you did last week, BUT
- ✓ For the italicized section, write a “review” of Rierdan’s book for an audience of corrections officers.

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny,
 - “Coming Into Language,” Jimmy Santiago Baca (100-106)
 - “Pell Grants for Prisoners,” Jon Marc Taylor (107-112)
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Week 7: *On-site Workshops (1 ½ hours) + Wednesday Class*

- **Mid-term workshop- & self-assessment**
- Bedford Hills Film
- Discussion of readings & value (or not) of writing workshops
- Team planning meetings

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ 3-part Reflection

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny,
 - “Tetrina,” Bedford Hills Poetry Workshop (113)
 - “Sestina: Reflections on Writing,” Bedford Hills Poetry Workshop” (114-118)
 - “Behind the Mirror’s Face,” Paul St. John (119-125)
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Week 8: *On-site Workshops (1 ½ hours)*

NO CLASS THIS WEEK

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ 3-part Reflection

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny
 - “Sam,” Michael Wayne Hunter (196-205)

Week 9: *On-site Poetry Reading and end-of-workshop celebration (1 ½ hours)*

Wednesday Class

Journal Assignment:

- ✓ 3-part Reflection

Reading Assignment:

1. Chevigny
 - “The Red Dress,” Barbara Saunders (221-222)
 - “A Trilogy of Journeys,” Kathy Boudin (241-243)
 - “After All These Years,” Ajamu C. B. Haki ((288-289)
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Week 10: *Last Wednesday class and quarter wrap-up and celebration (3 hours)*

- “What I Want My Words to Do to You” screening & discussion
- Last literature discussion
- Reflections on the workshops & learning
- Turn in
 - ✓ resource boxes
 - ✓ team reports (with addresses of women who need anthologies & certificates mailed)
 - ✓ anthology (2 hard copies)

- ✓ anthology disk
- ✓ evaluations from the women
- ✓ permissions from the women (EXTREMELY important)

PLUS:

- ✓ your journals with 9 entries
- ✓ your self-report and assessment of the workshop