

**CAPTIVITY-----**  
**ENSLAVEMENT-----**  
**INCARCERATION-----**  
**LIBERATION-----**

## **Ethnicity & Diversity in US Culture**



Photo: Milad Fakurian / Unsplash

**Dr. Steffen Wöll**  
**Seminar**

**American Studies Leipzig**  
**Winter Term 2024/25**

**Monday 1-3PM**  
**NSG 320**

# SYLLABUS

## Course Description

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault identifies penal institutions as important sites of modernity. In Western societies, he argues, the prison has become a place where social discipline is enforced and economic productivity is sustained. With around 1.8 million incarcerated people in the United States as of 2024, this course recognizes the need for an in-depth exploration of the social, cultural, racial, and gender dynamics of captivity, enslavement, incarceration, and liberation throughout American history.

Through the lens of captivity narratives, we will explore how accounts such as Mary Rowlandson's shaped the perception of indigenous peoples in early American literature. Retracing the experiences documented in slave narratives, notably those recorded by Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, the seminar retraces the harrowing realities of black slavery.

Based on these enduring historical legacies, contemporary struggles for freedom by African American communities will be addressed through such lenses as moral panic concerning black delinquency, stop-and-frisk policies, mass incarceration, and the racialized logics of the prison-industrial complex.

Further seminar topics include Asian-American internment camps during World War 2, present-day immigrant detention centers at the US-Mexico border, narratives of white victimhood, challenges faced by LGBTQ+ individuals in captivity, as well as fantasies of prison break and escape. Finally, based on philosopher-activist Angela Davis' assertion that "[p]risons do not disappear social problems, they disappear human beings," we will engage with current voices of social activism and prison reform.

**CAPTIVITY  
ENSLAVEMENT  
INCARCERATION  
LIBERATION**

**Ethnicity and Diversity I  
Seminar**

Winter Term 2024/25

**MONDAY 1 – 3PM  
NSG 320**

<https://moodle2.uni-leipzig.de/course/view.php?id=50057>

**Dr. Steffen Wöll**

**Office Hours**

Friday 4 – 5PM  
via Zoom

<https://uni-leipzig.zoom.us/j/7680878384>

# Objectives

This seminar aims to

- explore the intersections between the concepts of ethnicity/race and freedom/incarceration
- familiarize participants with analytical approaches and theoretical perspectives as part of the methodological plurality of American Studies
- enable students to develop research interests and pursue them in academic debate and writing

# Requirements

To earn credits in this seminar, you are expected to

- attend class on a regular basis
- prepare the readings for each session and bring the assigned texts to class
- participate in discussions and group work
- pass the Prüfungsvorleistungen (PVL)
- pass the final exam (Prüfungsleistung)

# Prüfungsvorleistungen (Research Portfolio)

To be eligible for the final exam, you are required to complete 2 Prüfungsvorleistungen (PVL).

## PVL 1: Reading responses

- Out of all topical sessions (not counting the introduction) pick 4 for which to write a reading response.
- Responses of 1–2 paragraphs should discuss aspects of the readings you find interesting, (dis)agree with, and questions you feel should be brought up in class.
- Responses are due by Sunday 1pm, i.e. 24 hours before class to be posted on Moodle.
- Summarizing readings will lead to failing the PVL.
- Keep track of your completion rate to make sure you have posted 4 responses by the end.

## PVL 2 (due February 2 on Moodle): Term paper preparations

300-400 word discussion of ideas regarding your term paper. Reflect on your interest in the topic, what you want to find out, and possible challenges. Add a (preliminary) thesis statement, followed by a detailed outline of your paper, including chapter titles. Append a list of works cited containing a minimum of 3 secondary sources in MLA format.

### Note:

- During your research journey, your topical focus and arguments can (and should) evolve and do not have to adhere strictly to those outlined in your PVL.
- Plagiarism and/or copying text from ChatGPT (or similar) will lead to failing the PVL.

PVL are graded on a pass/fail basis. Late submissions can only be accepted in case of illness, verified by a doctor's certificate. Failed PVL may be repeated once.

## Prüfungsleistung (Projektarbeit)

The final exam evaluates your academic progress throughout the semester. It is mandatory for passing not only this course but the entire ED-I module, except for Erasmus students.

The Prüfungsleistung is a Projektarbeit (project work). This format consists of a **term paper** and **oral presentation**, to be held in the accompanying tutorial. Final grades are calculated from the weighted arithmetic mean of the term paper (double weight) and presentation (single weight).

**Term papers are due on March 17, 2025. Details are provided in a separate document.**

## Erasmus

Erasmus students may earn 2 ECTS for attending the seminar, or 4 ECTS for successfully completing both PVL and term paper.

## Code of Conduct

This seminar enforces the American Studies Leipzig code of conduct (see <https://www.philol.uni-leipzig.de/en/institute-for-american-studies/studying/study-programs>)

## Trigger Warning

Academic practice in the humanities thrives through open debate among diverse perspectives. Please be aware that we will engage with a wide spectrum of concepts and ideas, some of which might be viewed as controversial or hurtful.

## Plagiarism & Generative AI

Plagiarism is a serious form of academic misconduct in which an individual submits or presents the work of another person as their own. Scholarship often relies on examining and referring to thoughts and writings of others. However, doing so without proper acknowledgment is intellectually dishonest and a form of fraud. When you borrow three or more consecutive words, an original term, or a distinctive phrase, you must enclose the borrowed element in quotation marks to acknowledge your indebtedness. Any instance of plagiarism can have serious professional and legal consequences, including expulsion from the course and subsequent annulment of an academic degree.

American Studies Leipzig utilizes software that promptly detects AI-generated text.

**Submitting text generated by ChatGPT or other AI-tool as part of your written assignments will result in failing the assignment, and trigger an inquiry by an examination board.**

# Schedule

1	Oct 14	<b>Introduction</b>	<p>Miller, "Something Like an Introduction" in <i>Halfway Home</i> (2021), pp. 5-15</p> <p>Schept, "Introduction" in <i>Progressive Punishment</i> (2015), pp. 1-29</p> <p>Overview, introductions, requirements, Q&amp;A</p> <p>Be ready to introduce yourself and your research interests. Also take a moment to reflect about your expectations from the seminar.</p>
2	Oct 21	<b>Captivity &amp; Savagery</b>	<p>Ross, "Worlds Collide" in <i>Inventing the Savage</i> (1998), pp. 11-33</p> <p>Rowlandson, <i>Narrative</i> (1682)</p>
3	Oct 28	<b>Blackness I - Slavery</b>	<p>Johnson, "The Empire of the White Man's Will" in <i>River of Dark Dreams</i> (2013), pp. 176-208</p> <p>Brown, <i>Narrative</i> (1847)</p>
4	Nov 4	<b>Blackness II - Moral Panic</b>	<p>Welch et al., "Youth Violence and Race in the Media: The Emergence of 'Wilding' as an Invention of the Press" (2004)</p> <p>Burns, <i>The Central Park Five</i> (2012)</p>
5	Nov 11	<b>Blackness III - Mass Incarceration</b>	<p>Gramlich, "The gap between the number of blacks and whites in prison is shrinking" (2019)</p> <p>Colley, "'All America Is a Prison': The Nation of Islam and the Politicization of African American Prisoners" (2014)</p> <p>Oz, S01E01, "The Routine" (1997)</p>

**No class on November 18 (ASA in Baltimore)**

6	Nov 25	<b>Whiteness &amp; Victimhood</b>	<p>Kelly, "Sun's Out, Guns Out: Open Carry and the White Male Body" in <i>Apocalypse Man</i> (2020), pp. 105-129</p> <p>Liebler, "Me(di)a Culpa?: The 'Missing White Woman Syndrome' and Media Self-Critique" (2010)</p>
<b>No class on December 2 (dies academicus)</b>			
7	Dec 9	<b>The Borders of Detention</b>	<p>Mirk, <i>Guantanamo Voices: True Accounts from the World's Most Infamous Prison</i> (2020)</p> <p>Macías-Rojas, "Beds and Biometrics: The Legacy of the Criminal Alien Program" in <i>From Deportation to Prison</i> (2016), pp. 40-76</p>
8	Dec 16	<b>Asian American Internment</b>	<p>Stanley, "Justice Deferred: A Fifty-Year Perspective on Japanese-Internment Historiography" (1992)</p> <p>NPR Code Sw!tch, <i>Photos: 3 Very Different Views Of Japanese Internment</i> (2016)</p> <p>Tule Lake Oral History Project (2009)</p>
9	Jan 6	<b>Queerness &amp; Incarceration</b>	<p>Mogul et al., "Gleeful Gay Killers, Lethal Lesbians, and Deceptive Gender Benders" in <i>Queer (In)Justice</i> (2012), pp. 31-53</p> <p>Ear Hustle, Ep. 100 "Bunkies" (2023)</p> <p>Orange is the New Black, S01E03, "Lesbian Request Denied" (2013)</p>
<b>Check the completion rate of your reading responses for PVL1</b>			
10	Jan 13	<b>Drugs &amp; Gangs</b>	<p>Hinton, "From the War on Crime to the War on Drugs" in <i>From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime</i> (2016), pp. 307-332</p> <p>Skarbek, "The Rise of Prison Gangs" in <i>The Social Order of the Underworld</i> (2014), pp. 47-72</p>

11	Jan 20	<b>Suburban Prisons of the Mind</b>	<p>Murphy, "Welcome to Disturbia" (2009)</p> <p>Macek, "Inventing the Savage Urban Other" in <i>Urban Nightmares</i> (2006), pp. 37-69</p>
12	Jan 27	<b>Bustin' Out</b>	<p>Bennett, "Representations of Prison Escapes in Films" in Martin &amp; Chantraine, eds. <i>Prison Breaks</i> (2018), pp. 265-290</p> <p>Kramer, <i>The Defiant Ones</i> (1958)</p>
<b>PVL 2 due on February 2</b>			
13	Feb 3	<b>Prison Reform &amp; Social Activism</b>	<p>Vera Institute of Justice, "American History, Race, and Prison"</p> <p>The Marshall Project, "Prison Reform: A Curated Collection of Links" (2024)</p> <p>Marcius, "Man Who Became Champion of Rehabilitation Is Charged With Murder" in <i>The New York Times</i>, June 4, 2024</p>
<b>Term papers due on March 17, 2025</b>			