



**GESM 120 (Section 35372R):
Crime & Punishment in L.A.**

Units: 4
Fall 2023; T, Th 2:00-3:20 pm
Location: DMC 105
Instructor: Dr. Melissa Daniels-Rauterkus,
Associate Professor of English

Office: THH 449D
Office Hours: Wednesdays 9am-12pm on Zoom; please email me for an appointment
Contact Info: rauterku@usc.edu

IT Help: USC Information Technology Services
Hours of Service: Telephone support available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. Email support available Mon.-Fri. 8:00 am-6:00 pm.

Contact Info: consult@usc.edu; (213) 740-5555;
see also Dornsife Technology Services at:
dornsife.usc.edu/contact-cts/

Course Description

Nowhere in L.A. is the gap between the rich and the poor wider than it is in the criminal justice system. The rich and the famous go unpunished, while the poor go to prison. Race compounds this inequality, as people of color are disproportionately stopped by the police, beaten, murdered, charged with criminal offenses, and/or given harsher sentences than whites. What is the nature of crime in L.A.? Why do we often pursue punishment as opposed to more restorative forms of justice? And what does it say about us as a society?

In this seminar, students will explore the relationship between crime and punishment in L.A. by considering a wide range of narratives from a variety of perspectives, including memoir, history, sociology, documentary film, and literary journalism. Students will reflect on the period from the Watts Riots to the present day to develop an appreciation for how contemporary inequalities are influenced by the legacies of the past. We will discuss the various forces that shaped modern-day L.A., the impact of deindustrialization and white flight on the city, the Rodney King beating/trial, the L.A. Riots, the O.J. Simpson trial, and the homicide epidemic in underserved and disadvantaged communities.



By the end of the class, students will have a greater understanding of the complex forces that contribute to crime in L.A. and that shape our responses to it. Students will also learn how to think about local problems in relationship to larger, national conversations about racial/social/economic disparities and social justice. The goal of this seminar is to think critically about the world we inhabit, and to contemplate what it would take to create a more equitable society. Students will write a reaction paper, complete a midterm exam, and submit a reflective essay at the end of the semester.



Learning Objectives

- Understand human experience as narrative
- Engage with large, abstract ideas such as justice, ethics, and democracy
- Learn how to read, think, and write critically about complex issues
- Reflect on how race, class, and gender affect our lives and experiences, especially within the criminal justice system
- Learn how to assess contemporary social problems from multiple vantage points and how to develop informed opinions about them.

Course Notes

Grading Type: Letter

This is a web-enhanced course that utilizes Blackboard. I will post assignments, supplemental readings and links to digital content on the platform.

Technological Proficiency and Hardware/Software Required

Beginner; access to Blackboard, Zoom, and the ability to stream digital content on Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, etc.

Required Readings and Supplementary Materials

Books:

1. Danielle Allen, *CUZ: An American Tragedy* (2018)
2. Jill Leovy, *Ghettoside: A True Story of Murder in America* (2015)

Films:

1. John Ridley, *Let It Fall*
2. Daniel Lindsay and T.J. Martin, *L.A. 92*
3. Ezra Edelman, *O.J.: Made In America*

Web Materials:

1. The L.A. Riots: The Independent and Webster Commissions Collections:
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-los-angeles-riots-christopher-and-webster-commissions-collections/index?path=webster-commission-records>

**Note: additional readings will appear on Blackboard*

****** All books are available for purchase/rent at the USC Bookstore: 840 Childs Way, Los Angeles 90089 (213) 740-0066

Description and Assessment of Assignments:

1. **Reaction Paper (5 pages)**—Select one of the assigned readings or viewings we have discussed in class and draft an informal response to it. Prioritize your personal experience reading and thinking about the work. What experiences and/or feelings did it evoke? What impact did it have on you? What are the major takeaways? And how might you utilize the information you received as you go forward?
2. **Midterm Exam**—Identify terms from our readings and answer two short-answer essay questions. This is an in-class exam that requires a Blue exam book. Please secure your own exam book.
3. **End of Term Assignment: Reflective Essay (10 pages)**—Write a reflective essay in which you discuss what you learned in this class. How has it changed your perspective? How did you grow? Which reading/viewing assignments made the biggest impression on you? How will you take what you learned in this class and apply it to your life going forward and/or use it to bring about positive change? I will provide a more detailed assignment sheet well in advance of the due date.

Grading Breakdown

Assignment	Points	% of Grade
Attendance & Participation	100	10
Reaction Paper	100	30
Midterm Exam	100	30
Final Paper	100	30
TOTAL	400	100

Grading Scale

Course final grades will be determined using the following scale

A	93-100	C	73-76
A-	90-92	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	59 and below

Grading Philosophy

For each written assignment you complete and submit, you will receive a score and a brief narrative statement (about 3-4 sentences) summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of your paper. My comments will address content (i.e. the quality and rigor of your ideas or argument) and composition (i.e. how well you write, including organization, grammar, mechanics, and usage). If you'd like to receive more substantive feedback, then make an appointment to meet with me during office hours.

Assignment Submission Policy

Assignments are due on the day listed on the syllabus. Please submit all work directly to me via email. Your work should be submitted as a MS Word document so that I can use the "reviewing" feature to comment on your paper. The file name should be: your first and last name_the name of the class_and the name of the assignment.

Grading Timeline

All assignments will be graded and returned no later than two weeks after submission. Final papers will not be returned unless requested.

Additional Policies

- Attendance and Participation:** Consistent attendance and participation is critical to your success in this class. If you miss a class, then you should reach out to another student in the class for notes or make an appointment to see me during office hours. Please do not come to class late or leave early, as this is disruptive to me and your fellow classmates. If you need to arrive late or leave early on a specific day, please let me know as soon as possible.
- Course Format/Meeting Structure:** The format of this course is a mixture of lecture, discussion, and applied learning activities. I'm a big fan of the "flipped" classroom, in which activities that would traditionally be assigned as homework are completed during class time. Towards this end, I may use freewriting exercises, media, visual art, op-eds, supplemental readings, or other aids to enhance our understanding of the material and structure our time in class. Always bring your reading and writing materials to our meetings. Class will generally begin with an ice-breaker/warm up activity—e.g. we might discuss a quote, screen a clip, or engage in a freewriting activity. After this, I/or another student might present important information in the form of a mini-lecture, guided discussion, or a reaction paper. Other times, I will give you an applied learning activity to work on in a pair or smaller group. Class will end with a summary/wrap-up of the material discussed.

4. **Email:** I will respond to emails during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, from 9 am to 5 pm. Emails sent outside of this window will be responded to during the next business day. I generally reply to emails within a day, but if it takes me longer, please be patient.
5. **Office Hours:** I am available, by appointment, for virtual office hour visits via Zoom. If you'd like to schedule a virtual visit, please email me for a 20-minute consultation. In office hours, I can elaborate on class discussions and help with assignments.
6. **The Writing Center:** While I am always happy to meet with you in office hours to discuss the materials we read/discuss in class as well as assist you with approaches to your written assignments, if you need writing help, then I recommend that you make an appointment for a consultation with a tutor at the writing center. The staff is comprised of scholars and teachers trained in Composition and Rhetoric as academic fields and can assist you with the writing process from start to finish. You can book a consultation here: <https://dornsife.usc.edu/writingcenter/>.
7. **In-class Behavior:** You are expected to demonstrate proper academic etiquette at all times. Please do not check and/or send emails while in class, text-message, or complete assignments for other classes. Please refrain from voicing opinions that may be perceived as being offensive or insensitive.
8. **Synchronous Session Recording Notice:**
All synchronous sessions will be recorded and provided to all students asynchronously. USC prohibits the sharing of any synchronous and asynchronous course content outside of the learning environment. Please take note of the following policy:

S Campus Section 11.12(B)

Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on university classes or lectures without the express permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study is a violation of the USC Student Conduct Code. This includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes. This restriction on unauthorized use also applies to all information, which had been distributed to students or in any way had been displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the Internet or via any other media. (See Section C.1 Class Notes Policy).

Course Schedule: A Weekly Breakdown

**Note: assignments are subject to change at the instructor's discretion.*

	Topics/In-Class Activities	Readings and Homework	Deliverable
Week 1	T 8/22: Introductions, course overview, and syllabus Th 8/24: Loury	Glenn C. Loury, "Crime, Inequality, and Social Justice" Josh Sides, "Straight into Compton"	
Week 2	T 8/29: Sides Th 8/31: Lipton; Watch <i>Let It Fall</i> (2017) in class	S. Gregory Lipton, "Los Angeles in Transition: What Will Tomorrow Bring?"	
Week 3	T 9/05: <i>Let It Fall</i> , con't.	Explore the digital exhibit on the L.A. Riots: https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-los-angeles-riots-christopher-and-	

		webster-commissions-collections/index?path=webster-commission-records	
	Th 9/07: Digital Exhibit Presentation on the L.A. Riots	Tom Matthews et al., “The Siege of L.A.” (<i>Newsweek</i>)	
Week 4	T 9/12: Matthews et. al.; Watch <i>LA 92</i> (2017) in class Th 9/14: <i>LA 92</i> , con’t.	Brenda E. Stevenson, “Latasha Harlins, Soon Ja Du, and Joyce Karlin”	
Week 5	T 9/19: Stevenson Th 9/21: Roediger and Johnson; Watch <i>O.J.: Made In America</i> , Part 1 in class	David R. Roediger and Leola Johnson, “Hertz Don’t It? White ‘Colorblindnes’ and the Marketings of O.J. Simpson”	Reaction Paper
Week 6	T 9/26: <i>Made In America</i> , Part 1, con’t. Th 9/28: <i>Made In America</i> , Part 3 in class	Jeffrey Toobin, “An Incendiary Defense”	
Week 7	T 10/03: Toobin; <i>Made In America</i> , Part 3, con’t. Th 10/05: Coates; <i>Made In America</i> , Part 5 in class	Ta-Nehisi Coates, “What O.J. Simpson Means To Me” Study for Midterm Exam	
Week 8	T 10/10: Midterm Exam (take home) Th 10/12: No Class/Fall Recess	Danielle Allen, <i>Cuz</i> , pp. xiii-46	Midterm Exam
Week 9	T 10/17: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. xiii-46 Th 10/19: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 47-92	<i>Cuz</i> , pp. 47-92 <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 93-145	
Week 10	T 10/24: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 93-145 Th 10/26: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 146-193	<i>Cuz</i> , pp. 146-193 <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 194-223	

Week 11	T 10/31: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 194-223 Th 11/02: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 3-43	Jill Leovy, <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 3-43 <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 44-84	
Week 12	T 11/07: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 44-84 Th 11/09: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 85-125	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 85-125 <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 126-166	
Week 13	T 11/14: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 126-166 Th 11/16: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 167-207	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 167-207 <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 208-248	
Week 14	T 11/21: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 208-248 Th 11/23: No Class/Thanksgiving Holiday	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 249-289	
Week 15	T 11/28: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 249-289 Th 11/30: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 290-319	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 290-319	
FINAL			Final Paper

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct:

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Part B, Section 11, “Behavior Violating University Standards” policy.usc.edu/scampus-part-b. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

Support Systems:

Student Counseling Services (SCS) – (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – 1 (800) 273-8255

Provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) – (213) 740-4900 – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender-based harm. engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp

Sexual Assault Resource Center

For more information about how to get help or help a survivor, rights, reporting options, and additional resources, visit the website: sarc.usc.edu

Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX Compliance – (213) 740-5086

Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. equity.usc.edu

Bias Assessment Response and Support

Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response. studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support

The Office of Disability Services and Programs

Provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange relevant accommodations. dsp.usc.edu

Student Support and Advocacy – (213) 821-4710

Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa

Diversity at USC

Information on events, programs and training, the Diversity Task Force (including representatives for each school), chronology, participation, and various resources for students. diversity.usc.edu

USC Emergency Information

Provides safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible. emergency.usc.edu

USC Department of Public Safety – UPC: (213) 740-4321 – HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24-hour emergency or to report a crime. Provides overall safety to USC community. dps.usc.edu