



**GESM 120 (Section 35355R):  
Crime & Punishment in L.A.**

**Units: 4**  
**Spring 2024; T, Th 12:30-1:50 pm**  
**Location: WPH 206**  
**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](mailto: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](mailto:consult@usc.edu); (213) 740-5555;  
see also Dornsife Technology Services at:  
[dornsife.usc.edu/contact-cts/](http://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*
4. Mark Earl Burman and Mike Cooley, *South Bureau Homicide* (2017)

### 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?

## Grading Breakdown

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

## 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
<b>Week 1</b>	T 1/09: Introductions, course overview, and syllabus  Th 1/11: Loury	Glenn C. Loury, "Crime, Inequality, and Social Justice"  Josh Sides, "Straight into Compton"	
<b>Week 2</b>	T 1/16: Sides  Th 1/18: Lipton; Watch <i>Let It Fall</i> (2017)	S. Gregory Lipton, "Los Angeles in Transition: What Will Tomorrow Bring?"	

<b>Week 3</b>	T 1/23: <i>Let It Fall</i> , con't.  Th 1/25: Digital Exhibit Presentation on the L.A. Riots	Explore the digital exhibit on the L.A. Riots: <a href="https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-los-angeles-riots-christopher-and-webster-commissions-collections/index?path=webster-commission-records">https://scalar.usc.edu/works/the-los-angeles-riots-christopher-and-webster-commissions-collections/index?path=webster-commission-records</a>  Tom Matthews et al., "The Siege of L.A." ( <i>Newsweek</i> )	
<b>Week 4</b>	T 1/30: Matthews et. al.; Watch <i>LA 92</i> (2017)  Th 2/01: <i>LA 92</i> , con't.	Brenda E. Stevenson, "Latasha Harlins, Soon Ja Du, and Joyce Karlin"	<b>Reaction Paper 2/01</b>
<b>Week 5</b>	T 2/06: Stevenson  Th 2/08: Roediger and Johnson; Watch <i>O.J.: Made In America</i> , Part 1	David R. Roediger and Leola Johnson, "Hertz Don't It? White 'Colorblindnes' and the Marketings of O.J. Simpson"	
<b>Week 6</b>	T 2/13: <i>Made In America</i> , Part 1, con't.  Th 2/15: <i>Made In America</i> , Part 3	Jeffrey Toobin, "An Incendiary Defense"	
<b>Week 7</b>	T 2/20: Toobin; <i>Made In America</i> , Part 3, con't.  Th 2/22: Coates; <i>Made In America</i> , Part 5	Ta-Nehisi Coates, "What O.J. Simpson Means To Me"  Study for Midterm Exam	
<b>Week 8</b>	T 2/27: Midterm Exam  Th 2/29: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. xiii-46	Danielle Allen, <i>Cuz</i> , pp. xiii-46  <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 47-92	<b>Midterm Exam 2/27</b>
<b>Week 9</b>	T 3/05: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 47-92  Th 3/07: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 93-145	<i>Cuz</i> , pp. 93-145  <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 146-193	
<b>Week 10</b>	Spring Break/No Classes		

<b>Week 11</b>	T 3/19: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 146-193  Th 3/21: <i>Cuz</i> , pp. 194-223	<i>Cuz</i> , pp. 194-223	
<b>Week 12</b>	T 3/26: Watch <i>When a 16-Year-Old is Locked Up in a Supermax Prison/Stickup Kid</i> (Frontline on Alonza Thomas)  Th 3/28: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 3-43	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 3-43  <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 44-84	
<b>Week 13</b>	T 4/02: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 44-84  Th 4/04: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 85-125	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 85-125  <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 126-166	
<b>Week 14</b>	T 4/09: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 126-166  Th 4/11: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 167-207	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 167-207  <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 208-248	
<b>Week 15</b>	T 4/16: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 208-248  Th 4/18: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 249-289	<i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 249-289  <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 290-319	
<b>Week 16</b>	T 4/23: <i>Ghettoside</i> , pp. 290-319  Th 4/25: Watch <i>South Bureau Homicide</i>		
<b>FINAL</b>			<b>Final Paper 5/02</b>

### ***Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems***

#### **Academic Integrity:**

The University of Southern California is a learning community committed to developing successful scholars and researchers dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Academic misconduct, which includes any act of dishonesty in the production or submission of academic work, compromises the integrity of the person who commits the act and can impugn the perceived integrity of the entire university community. It stands in opposition to the university's mission to research, educate, and contribute productively to our community and the world.

All students are expected to submit assignments that represent their own original work, and that have been prepared specifically for the course or section for which they have been submitted. You may not submit work written by others or "recycle" work prepared for other courses without obtaining written permission from the instructor(s).

Other violations of academic integrity include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, fabrication (e.g., falsifying data), collusion, knowingly assisting others in acts of academic dishonesty, and any act that gains or is intended to gain an unfair academic advantage.

The impact of academic dishonesty is far-reaching and is considered a serious offense against the university. All incidences of academic misconduct will be reported to the Office of Academic Integrity and could result in outcomes such as failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension, or even expulsion from the university.

For more information about academic integrity see [the student handbook](#) or the [Office of Academic Integrity's website](#), and university policies on [Research and Scholarship Misconduct](#).

Please ask your instructor if you are unsure what constitutes unauthorized assistance on an exam or assignment, or what information requires citation and/or attribution.

### **Students and Disability Accommodations:**

USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. [The Office of Student Accessibility Services](#) (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers. Once a student has completed the OSAS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and accommodations are determined to be reasonable and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be available to generate for each course. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at [osas.usc.edu](#). You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu).

### **Support Systems:**

[Counseling and Mental Health](#) - (213) 740-9355 – 24/7 on call

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

[988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) - 988 for both calls and text messages – 24/7 on call

The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline) provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, across the United States. The Lifeline is comprised of a national network of over 200 local crisis centers, combining custom local care and resources with national standards and best practices. The new, shorter phone number makes it easier for people to remember and access mental health crisis services (though the previous 1 (800) 273-8255 number will continue to function indefinitely) and represents a continued commitment to those in crisis.

[Relationship and Sexual Violence Prevention Services \(RSVP\)](#) - (213) 740-9355(WELL) – 24/7 on call

Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to gender- and power-based harm (including sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking).

[Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title IX \(EEO-TIX\)](#) - (213) 740-5086

Information about how to get help or help someone affected by harassment or discrimination, rights of protected classes, reporting options, and additional resources for students, faculty, staff, visitors, and applicants.

[Reporting Incidents of Bias or Harassment](#) - (213) 740-5086 or (213) 821-8298

Avenue to report incidents of bias, hate crimes, and microaggressions to the Office for Equity, Equal Opportunity, and Title for appropriate investigation, supportive measures, and response.

[The Office of Student Accessibility Services \(OSAS\)](#) - (213) 740-0776

OSAS ensures equal access for students with disabilities through providing academic accommodations and auxiliary aids in accordance with federal laws and university policy.

[USC Campus Support and Intervention](#) - (213) 740-0411

Assists students and families in resolving complex personal, financial, and academic issues adversely affecting their success as a student.

[Diversity, Equity and Inclusion](#) - (213) 740-2101

Information on events, programs and training, the Provost's Diversity and Inclusion Council, Diversity Liaisons for each academic school, chronology, participation, and various resources for students.

[USC Emergency](#) - UPC: (213) 740-4321, HSC: (323) 442-1000 – 24/7 on call

Emergency assistance and avenue to report a crime. Latest updates regarding safety, including ways in which instruction will be continued if an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible.

[USC Department of Public Safety](#) - UPC: (213) 740-6000, HSC: (323) 442-1200 – 24/7 on call

Non-emergency assistance or information.

[Office of the Ombuds](#) - (213) 821-9556 (UPC) / (323-442-0382 (HSC)

A safe and confidential place to share your USC-related issues with a University Ombuds who will work with you to explore options or paths to manage your concern.

[Occupational Therapy Faculty Practice](#) - (323) 442-2850 or [otfp@med.usc.edu](mailto:otfp@med.usc.edu)

Confidential Lifestyle Redesign services for USC students to support health promoting habits and routines that enhance quality of life and academic performance.