

Policing and Punishment in American History (HIS 6934)

The United States incarcerates more people (both in absolute terms and per capita) than any other country. How and why did mass incarceration come to be? This course seeks to answer this question and related questions by exploring the long history of policing and punishment in the US. Beginning with the establishment of the first American penitentiary in the wake of the Revolution, the class covers the emergence of the juvenile justice system, the Border Patrol, the main instruments used to wage today's drug war, and beyond. This sweeping overview will serve to familiarize students with the historiography of the American carceral state, and the course assignments—which include two historiographical essays, two book reviews, and two presentations—will sharpen students' critical thinking, analytical, writing, and public speaking skills.