

BEHIND BARS

CROSS-CULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF PRISON IN THE 20TH CENTURY

SLAV 1225

Fall 2019

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Cathedral 235
TuTh 9:30–10:45



Prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere, which the whole of society pursues on each individual through innumerable mechanisms of discipline.

—Michel Foucault

The first prison I ever saw had inscribed on it Cease to do evil: Learn to do well; but as the inscription was on the outside, the prisoners could not read it.

—George Bernard Shaw

Be thine own palace, or the world's thy jail.

—John Donne

Men simply copied the realities of their hearts when they built prisons.

—Richard Wright

A pedestal is as much a prison as any small, confined space.

—Gloria Steinem

The vilest deeds like prison weeds / Bloom well in prison air: / It is only what is good in man / That wastes and withers there.

—Oscar Wilde

WELCOME TO THE COURSE

Behind Bars is a feast for your mind. We will examine traditional verbal texts, to be sure, and in a variety of categories—fact and fiction (and representations that fall somewhere in between the real and the imaginary); prose and verse, as well as drama; narratives both long and short; a Supreme Court decision; even a report of a psychological experiment gone horribly, frighteningly wrong. But we will explore many other kinds of media and cultural artifacts as well—films, both documentary and feature, including a comedy; music, both symphonic and popular; a graphic novel and other examples of visual culture, including photography, pen-and-ink drawings, and paintings in radically different styles; and a web-based, multimedia exhibit. In other words, this course promises to be enjoyable and richly rewarding. I am very happy to be here as your guide, and I am very happy that you have chosen to join us this semester for our exploration of an often grim and harrowing subject.



ABOUT *BEHIND BARS*

As the quotations on the cover reveal, the idea of prison can be a fertile source of metaphors for understanding ourselves and our world. Even more than that, however, prisons consist of real-world sets of carceral procedures that are purposefully designed to inflict, upon their vulnerable populations, varying degrees and varying types of suffering: physical, mental, and emotional. To understand these practices is thus to gain access to a privileged and extreme vantage-point for examining a culture and its values. Further still, a culture's representations or depictions of prisons are set apart from other cultural artifacts in terms of both the styles in which they are rendered and the content or themes that their creators choose to explore, allowing us to gain insights into that culture by examining how these representations work within and in relation to broader discourses. Simply put, the ways in which different cultures have represented prison are worth careful and sustained examination.

We will attend to representations of prison (including representations of imprisonment and other prison-related experiences) in three 20th-century cultural contexts: **(1)** the Soviet forced-labor camp system, the gulag; **(2)** the Nazi concentration camps of the Holocaust; and **(3)** a wide variety of prison experiences in the United States.

A student who earns an *A* in the course will be able to display with a high degree of competence that he or she has acquired each of the following three core skills:

- Reading and analyzing closely and critically, within their historical contexts, representations of prison (i.e., texts or other materials that have been generated in prison or about prison, imprisonment, or other prison-related experiences);
- Recognizing and drawing conclusions about key themes and representational strategies shared among many 20th-century representations of prison; and
- Producing a well-researched, well-reasoned, and well-written final paper that contains an original and historically sensitive reading or analysis of a representation of prison.

AN IMPORTANT PRELIMINARY NOTE

The fact that this course fulfills general-education requirements does not mean that the course is, or even should be, easy. Rather, the Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences seeks “to provide liberal arts and pre-professional education for undergraduate students that is grounded in scholarly excellence and offers students the knowledge, understanding, analytical tools, and communication skills they need to become perceptive, reflective, and intellectually self-conscious citizens in a diverse and rapidly changing world.” According to the Dietrich School, “The general education requirements are at the core of that goal.” This means that a general-education course (which for other students might be an elective in their major course of study) helps to satisfy a very rigorous mission, one that implies that you will do substantial, serious, and hard work in that course. Consider *Behind Bars*, which is an upper-level literature and culture course, to be an example of this view of general-education courses.

REQUIRED TEXTS

The following texts are available at the University Store on Fifth; other required texts and materials are posted on CourseWeb (CW):

Beckett, Samuel. *Waiting for Godot*. New York: Grove, 2011 (ISBN: 978-0802144423).

Solzhenitsyn, Alexander. *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. New York: Penguin, 2009 (ISBN: 978-0451228147).

Spiegelman, Art. *The Complete Maus: 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Pantheon, 1996 (ISBN: 978-0141014081).

Wiesel, Elie. *Night*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2006 (ISBN: 978-0374500016).

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND RESOURCES

If you find writing about literature to be difficult, then consult Katherine O. Acheson's *Writing Essays about Literature: A Brief Guide for University and College Students* (ISBN: 978-1551119922) or Susan Holbrook's *How to Read (and Write about) Poetry* (ISBN: 978-1551119915). The Purdue University Online Writing Lab also has a section on writing about literature, and many websites contain advice for writing about cultural artifacts other than verbal texts.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

(1) In order for me to be able to grade your written work efficiently and fairly, you must all use the same basic formatting so that, among other things, I can readily make comparisons (especially comparisons involving paper lengths) between and among papers. As a result, you ***must*** use the Microsoft Word templates located on CourseWeb for your work in the course. (2) Cutting and pasting into a template from another document can cause severe formatting errors; instead, type your work directly into the template. (3) ***Whenever*** you quote from or refer to a source, provide a clear parenthetical citation to a page number or, where appropriate, another kind of reference. (4) Use the following convention in naming files in Microsoft Word for submission on CourseWeb: type your last name and first initial in all capital letters, then an underscore character, then the name of the assignment in regular capitalization and spacing. An example: SMITHJ_Final Paper. ***Compliance with these instructions will be a grading factor.***

Feel free to consult secondary sources as an aid in encountering our texts. An effective reading requires more than a mere summary or paraphrase of a text's surface meaning, but you must have a thorough understanding of surface meaning before you can go on to the more penetrating work of analysis. Use secondary sources to help you to accomplish this preliminary task but never as a substitute for a genuine engagement with a text. Whenever you consult a source or receive other assistance in connection with your writing, however, you ***must*** acknowledge it with a citation or a note of thanks—failure to do so is a violation of the Academic Integrity Code.

SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION

<u>Week 1</u>	Tu 8/27	Course Orientation and First Thoughts
	Th 8/29	Imprisonment, Literature, and Culture: An Introduction
<u>Week 2</u>	Tu 9/3	Literary Analysis: An Introduction to Close Reading <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Guide (CW) • Excerpt from Ruth Whitman, <i>The Testing of Hanna Senesh</i> (CW)
	Th 9/5	Close Reading Practice Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Guide (CW) • Varlam Shalamov, "Dry Rations" (CW)

UNIT 1: THE GULAG

- Week 3** Tu 9/10 The Story of the Gulag: Part 1
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Jehanne M. Gheith and Katherine R. Jolluck, “Brief History of the Gulag”
 - Excerpts from David Hosford, Pamela Kachurin, and Thomas Lamont, *Gulag: Soviet Prison Camps and Their Legacy* (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 1 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)
- Th 9/12 The Story of the Gulag: Part 2
- Class Guide (CW)
 - *Days and Lives* (online multimedia exhibit) (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 1 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)
- Week 4** Tu 9/17 Gulag Memories
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Dmitry S. Likhachev, “Arrest” (CW)
 - Elena Semenovna Glinka, “The Hold” (CW)
 - Kazimierz Zarod, “A Day in Labor Corrective Camp No. 21” (CW)
 - Hava Volovich, “My Child” (CW)
 - Nina Ivanovna Rodina, “It Wasn’t Life” (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 2 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)
- Th 9/19 The Gulag from Novel to Film: Part 1
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*
 - ☛ Mini Memo 2 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)
- Week 5** Tu 9/24 The Gulag from Novel to Film: Part 2
- Class Guide (CW)
 - *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (dir. Caspar Wrede) (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 3 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)
- Th 9/26 Historical Fiction on the Gulag
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Varlam Shalamov, “Through the Snow,” “On Tick,” “In the Night,” “An Individual Assignment,” “The Injector,” “A Child’s Drawings,” and “A Day Off” (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 3 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)
- Week 6** Tu 10/1 The Gulag in Visual Culture
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Selected Images by Danzig Baldaev and Nikolai Getman (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 4 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)
- Th 10/3 Body as Text in the Post-Soviet Prison
- Class Guide (CW)
 - This assignment continues on the following page.*

- *Mark of Cain* (dir. Alix Lambert) (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 4 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)
- ☛ Practice Paper due via CourseWeb before 9:00 am (all students)

AN INTERLUDE

- Week 7** Tu 10/8 Late Modernism and 20th-Century Atrocities
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*
 - ☛ Mini Memo 5 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

UNIT 2: THE HOLOCAUST

- Th 10/10 Holocaust Survivor Testimony and Memoir
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Primo Levi, "Survival in Auschwitz" (CW)
 - Elie Wiesel, *Night*
 - ☛ Mini Memo 5 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

- Week 8** Tu 10/15 The Holocaust in the Symphonic Imagination
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Henryk Górecki, *Symphony of Sorrowful Songs*, movement 2 (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 6 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

- Th 10/17 The Voice of a Collaborator?
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Tadeusz Borowski, "This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen," "The Supper," "Silence," and "The World of Stone" (CW)
 - ☛ Mini Memo 6 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

- Week 9** Tu 10/22 The Holocaust in Visual Culture: Part 1
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Art Spiegelman, *My Father Bleeds History* (3–161) in *The Complete Maus*
 - ☛ Mini Memo 7 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

- Th 10/24 The Holocaust in Visual Culture: Part 2
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Art Spiegelman, *And Here My Troubles Began* (163–296) in *The Complete Maus*
 - ☛ Mini Memo 7 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

- Week 10** Tu 10/29 Poetic Responses to the Holocaust
- Class Guide (CW)
 - Abraham Sutzkever, "Burnt Pearls" (CW)
 - Jill Bart, "The Shower" (CW)
 - Paul Celan, "Deathfugue" (CW)
- This assignment continues on the following page.*

- Nelly Sachs, “Already Embraced by the Arm of Heavenly Solace” (CW)
- Denise Levertov, “During the Eichmann Trial” (CW)
- Dan Pagis, “Draft of a Reparations Agreement” (CW)
- Sylvia Plath, “Daddy” (CW)
- Recording of Sylvia Plath reading “Daddy” (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 8 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

Th 10/31 The Holocaust and Filmic Comedy

- Class Guide (CW)
- *Life Is Beautiful* (dir. Roberto Benigni) (on reserve through 10/30 at Stark Media Services, ground floor, Hillman Library: DVD-543)
- ☛ Mini Memo 8 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

UNIT 3: THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

Week 11 Tu 11/5 Early-20th-Century Representations of American Prisons

- Class Guide (CW)
- Excerpts from Donald Lowrie, *My Life in Prison* (CW)
- Excerpts from Jack Callahan, *Man’s Grim Justice: My Life Outside the Law* (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 9 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

Th 11/7 Japanese-American Internment Camps in WW2

- Class Guide (CW)
- Excerpts from Korematsu v. United States (CW)
- Jeni Yamada, “Legacy of Silence (II)” (CW)
- John Y. Tateishi, “Memories from behind Barbed Wire” (CW)
- Selected Images from Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 9 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

Week 12 Tu 11/12 The Stanford Prison Experiment

- Class Guide (CW)
- Craig Haney, Curtis Banks, and Philip Zimbardo, “A Study of Prisoners and Guards in a Simulated Prison” (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 10 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

Th 11/14 Late-20th-Century American Prison Poetry

- Class Guide (CW)
- Carolyn Baxter, “Lower Court” (CW)
- Ajamu C. B. Haki, “After All Those Years” (CW)
- Yasmeen Jamal, “The Gate” (CW)
- Etheridge Knight, “For Freckle-Faced Gerald” (CW)
- Judee Norton, “Arrival” (CW)
- William Wantling, “Poetry” (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 10 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

Week 13 Tu 11/19 The American Prison Experience in Music

- Class Guide (CW)
- Johnny Cash, “Folsom Prison Blues” (CW)
- Sam Cooke, “Chain Gang” (CW)
- Ella Fitzgerald, “Jail House Blues” (CW)
- Bob Dylan, “Hurricane” (CW)
- Soundgarden, “Rusty Cage” (CW)
- Snoop Dogg, “Murder Was the Case” (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 11 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

Th 11/21 The Death Penalty: A Cinematic Perspective

- Class Guide (CW)
- *Dead Man Walking* (dir. Tim Robbins) (on reserve through 11/20 at Stark Media Services, ground floor, Hillman Library: DVD-10959)
- ☛ Mini Memo 11 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group B)

Week 14 THANKSGIVING BREAK—NO CLASS**Week 15** Tu 12/3 A Contemporary Controversy

- Class Guide (CW)
- Excerpts from Leonard Peltier, *Prison Writings: My Life Is My Sun Dance* (CW)
- ☛ Mini Memo 12 due via hard copy at the beginning of class (Group A)

CONCLUSION

Th 12/5 Conclusions and Review

- ☛ Final Paper due via CourseWeb ***before 9:00 am*** (all students)

Final Exam: Monday, December 9, 4:00–5:50 pm

GRADING

Participation and Attendance	20%
Mini Memos (<i>less than a page each, due weekly</i>)	20%
Practice Paper (<i>3 pages, due Th 10/3</i>)	10%
Final Paper (<i>7 pages, due Th 12/5</i>)	25%
Final Exam (<i>M 12/9</i>)	25%

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE

The regularity of your attendance and the caliber and frequency of your class participation will represent twenty percent of your final grade in the course. For each session, you will receive a score of up to five points for participation and attendance:

Attending with two or more high-quality contributions	5
Attending with one high-quality contribution	4
Attending and engaged	3
Attending but disengaged	2
Attending but disruptive	1
Absent	0

I will drop your four lowest scores in calculating your average for participation and attendance. I do not distinguish between “excused” and “unexcused” absences except in accordance with University policy. Tardy arrivals that become serious or habitual will be penalized.

During most sessions, you will be able to earn an extra class-participation point, up to an absolute maximum of six total points, with an informal and impromptu but analytical written response to a Focus Passage that will be displayed on the screen during the first five to ten minutes of the session.

MINI MEMOS

Roughly once each week, using the template available on CourseWeb, you will write a Mini Memo, no more than a page long, consisting of: **(1)** a paragraph-long analytical response to a question or issue raised by the session’s Class Guide; and **(2)** a question for the class to discuss during the session. Mini Memos may *only, without exception*, be submitted at the beginning of class, in person, in hard copy, and by students who are attending the session. I will drop your four lowest Mini Memo scores in calculating your average, which will represent twenty percent of your course grade.

PAPERS

You will compose two papers this semester. The Practice Paper—at least three full pages long, due on Thursday, October 3, and worth ten percent of your final grade in the course—will be a low-stakes opportunity for you to practice the skill of literary analysis as you explore what a representation of the gulag can tell us about Russian or Soviet culture. In your Final Paper—at least seven full pages long, due on Thursday, December 5, and worth twenty-five percent of your final grade in the course—you will: **(1)** analyze a portion of a representation of the Holocaust or of the American prison experience; **(2)** compare your representation from the Practice Paper to your Holocaust or American prison representation; and **(3)** incorporate a discussion of a scholarly source into your work as you present an argument about what your representations of prison tell us about culture and cultural difference. More details will be provided in forthcoming assignment handouts.

FINAL EXAM

Your knowledge and understanding of the course readings, lectures, and discussions, as well as your ability to synthesize the material presented in the course, will be tested during a Final Exam on Monday, December 9, your grade on which will represent twenty-five percent of your final grade in the course. Part of the exam will consist of twenty multiple-choice questions; part will consist of a short essay on a broad topic. Although the multiple-choice portion of the exam will be closed-book, you may feel free to bring a page of notes with you for the essay section of the exam. More guidance will be supplied in due course.

COURSE POLICIES

My Most Important Policy: If you are having a problem with the course, all you have to do is let me know; *never* suffer in silence. If you are confused about what an assignment requires, if you are not sure how to meet my expectations, if you need some early feedback on your work, if you do not understand an assigned text or one of my comments, or if there is some other kind of assistance that you need, *tell me*—I want to make it possible for you to do your very best work.

Tardiness: Arriving late for any reason—even by “just” a few seconds—is distracting and disruptive. Tardy arrivals that become serious or habitual will be penalized.

Technology: Please keep your devices silent during class meetings, but feel free to use them for legitimate academic purposes.

Extensions: All dates are firm, and I grant extensions only in extremely unusual, dire, and fully documented circumstances or in accordance with University policy. All requests for extensions *must* be submitted in writing via e-mail. If I grant an extension, I reserve the right to assess a penalty against your grade on the assignment, with the default penalty being one letter grade for each day or portion of a day by which the assignment is late. Very unusual circumstances aside, e-mailing me a paper is not an adequate substitute for timely submission on CourseWeb, so if you miss the submission deadline on CourseWeb, you will ordinarily sustain a grade penalty.

Missing Class: Every class session is important, and you are accountable for all of the material that I present, so any time you need to be absent it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate in order to review what you missed and to check CourseWeb for any handouts that I might have distributed in your absence.

The 24-Hour Rule: I am happy to address any questions or concerns that you might have about work that I have graded and commented upon, but I will only do so after you have had a full opportunity to review the written feedback that I have provided. Please do not raise concerns or questions about an assignment until at least 24 hours after you have received it back from me, and even then, address your questions or concerns in writing via e-mail.

Office Hours: I am always happy to meet with students. Stop by to see me in Cathedral 1228 on Mondays from 9:00 am to 11:00 am and on Tuesdays from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. It will make my day. Seriously.

Plagiarism: I deal with plagiarism and other violations of the University’s Academic Integrity Code in the most stringent possible manner within my discretion. As a general rule, this means that if I find you plagiarizing or committing some other violation of the Code **you will receive a failing grade for the entire course.** The possible benefits of knowingly violating the Code are simply not worth the risks—do not take the chance. You can avoid unintentional violations by familiarizing yourself with the Code (<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>) or by asking me whether a particular practice is permissible or not.

Receiving Help: It is not plagiarism to ask for or receive assistance. In fact, I encourage you to do so. Feel free to discuss work with friends or colleagues, to consult secondary sources in order

to help you understand the primary readings, and to have a second pair of eyes review your written work for clarity, proofreading lapses, and errors in grammar or mechanics. However, if you consult a source or receive other assistance, you **must** acknowledge it with a citation or a note of thanks—failure to do so is a violation of the Academic Integrity Code.

Incompletes: I do not routinely issue *G* grades at the end of a course; I will do so only in truly extraordinary and fully documented circumstances and when a student seems likely to be able to finish the work of the course within a reasonable amount of time after the close of the semester.

REQUIRED STATEMENTS

The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences requires the following statements to be included in this syllabus.

Special Assistance: If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both me and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, drsrecep@pitt.edu, or 412-228-5347 for P3 ASL users, as early as possible in the term. DRS will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

E-Mail Communication Policy: Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.)

Safe Assign: Students agree that by taking this course all required papers will be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Safe Assign for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Safe Assign reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Safe Assign page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Safe Assign site.

Classroom Recording: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion, and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

General-Education Requirement Statements: If you matriculated at the University in Fall 2018 or after, then this course satisfies the following general-education requirements for you: Literature and Cross-Cultural Awareness. If you matriculated at the University prior to Fall 2018, then

this course satisfies the following general-education requirements for you: Literature and Foreign Culture / International (comparative). For any questions about these requirements and how the course fulfills them, please consult your academic advisor.

Grades Scored Between			Will Equal	Grades Manually Entered as	Will Calculate as
97	% and	100	%	A+	98.5 %
94	% and	Less Than	97%	A	95 %
90	% and	Less Than	94%	A-	91.5 %
87	% and	Less Than	90%	B+	88.5 %
84	% and	Less Than	87%	B	85 %
80	% and	Less Than	84%	B-	81.5 %
77	% and	Less Than	80%	C+	78.5 %
74	% and	Less Than	77%	C	75 %
70	% and	Less Than	74%	C-	71.5 %
67	% and	Less Than	70%	D+	68.5 %
64	% and	Less Than	67%	D	65 %
60	% and	Less Than	64%	D-	61.5 %
0	% and	Less Than	60%	F	0 %