This seminar surveys three spatial forms—the plantation, the prison, and the ghetto—that have served as foundations for the American project. Aligned with colonialism and domination, these spaces have sustained white supremacy in the United States and have defied attempts that would see them dismantled. This course considers, both theoretically and historically, how the production of space and the production of racial difference have been articulated together in the US.

The course is premised in an assumption that these spaces do not comprise a historical sequence. In other words, it is not necessarily the case that, for example, the plantation “evolves” into the ghetto, or that the ghetto “evolves” into the prison. Rather, their history is messy, overlapping, and repetitive. As forms, they persist across time. We will consider the structures and logics of captivity and profit that have reproduced “blackness” from the eighteenth century to the present day in what is now called the United States.

**SCHEDULE**

**Historical Foundations**

T 6/30
James Baldwin, “Letter to My Nephew”
Matthew Desmond, “Capitalism” from *The 1619 Project*

**Plantation**

Th 7/2
Frederick Douglass, “A General Survey of the Slave Plantation” (1855)
Stephanie Smallwood, “Turning African Captives into Atlantic Commodities” from *Saltwater Slavery*
Walter Johnson, Introduction, Chap. 1 & Chap 8 from *River of Dark Dreams*
Edward Baptist, “Left Hand” from *The Half Has Never Been Told*

**Plantation**

T 7/7
Pete Daniel, “The Metamorphosis of Slavery, 1865-1900”
Aaron Carico, “Freedom as Accumulation”
Katherine McKittrick, “Plantation Futures”
Loic Wacquant, “From Slavery to Mass Incarceration”

**Prison**

Th 7/9
W. E. B. Du Bois, “Back Toward Slavery” from *Black Reconstruction*
Saidiya Hartman, “The Burdened Individuality of Freedom”
Bryan Wagner, “The Strange Career of Bras-Coupé”  
*The Farm*, dir. Liz Garbus

**Ghetto**  
T 7/14  
Allan Spear, “Origins of the Urban Ghetto”  
Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe”

**Prison**  
Th 7/14  
George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* and *Blood in My Eye* (Excerpts)  
Khalil Gibran Muhammad, “Where Did All the White Criminals Go?”  
Tony Platt, selections from *Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States*  
Naomi Murakawa, “The First Civil Right”

**Ghetto**  
T 7/19  
Aaron Carico, “In the Trap”  
Elizabeth Hinton, Introduction to *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime*  
Keeanga Yamahatta-Taylor, Introduction & Conclusion to *Race for Profit*  
*Rat Film* (2016), dir. Theo Anthony

**Prison**  
Th 7/21  
Jackie Wang, Chaps. 1 & 2 from *Carceral Capitalism*  
Ruth Wilson Gilmore, “Prisons and Class Warfare: An Interview”  
Alex Vitale, “The Limits of Police Reform”  

**Abolition**  
T 7/26  
Angela Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*  
“Abolishing Prison with Mariame Kaba,” on *Why Is This Happening?* podcast  
Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations”  
*Whose Streets?*, dir. Sabaah Folayan

**Symposium**  
Th 7/28  
Assigned texts will be decided collaboratively
ASSIGNMENTS

1) Do the reading and participate in our seminar discussions. Please note that there are NO unexcused absences during summer session. [20%]

2) You’ll be required to write a five-page response paper to the first week’s readings, due before the beginning of our second week of classes. This paper will be an occasion for you to begin to analyze the course’s introductory histories and concepts. This paper will also include some critical analysis of your own position in relation to these institutions. [20%]

3) For each class, you must bring in one typed discussion question, of at least a few sentences, that examines and expands upon and draws connections across themes from that day’s readings. [30%]

4) For your final (10 pages), you will research and write about a “case study” of your choice, in consultation with me. It might be historical, or it might be contemporary. It might veer toward the empirical or toward the cultural. This paper will be an opportunity for you to explore the course’s themes in a context of your own choosing. We will talk more about it later in the course. [30%]

PLAGIARISM

All written work submitted in this course is expected to be your own, with any wording and/or idea taken from any other source fairly attributed. To use phrases and/or ideas from any other source as if they were your own, whether accidentally or deliberately, constitutes plagiarism. Submitting your own work for more than one course without permission of both instructors can also constitute plagiarism. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade. For a full discussion of plagiarism and explanations of how and when to cite, see the Writing Center’s website: http://writing.yalecollege.yale.edu/advice-students/using-sources/understanding-and-avoiding-plagiarism