Plantation, Prison, and Ghetto in the United States
Session A, May 30 - June 29
Meeting Times: T Th 1.00-4.15

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 what Katherine McKittrick calls “racial geographies,” they persist across time. We will consider the structures and logics of captivity and profit that have reproduced “blackness” (and “whiteness”) from the eighteenth century to the present day in what is now called the United States. We will also spend time studying the abolitionist movements that have fought the ongoing legacy of these carceral spaces and are seeking—right now—to reckon with their history.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Historical Foundations
Racial Capitalism & Prison Abolition (zine)
Matthew Desmond, “Capitalism” from The 1619 Project
James Baldwin, “The White Man’s Guilt”
Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, “Culture of Conquest,” from An Indigenous Peoples’ History
Colin Dayan, “Civil Death,” from The Law Is a White Dog
Patrick Wolfe “Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race” (excerpt)

Week 2: Plantation
Walter Johnson, Introduction & Chap. 1 from River of Dark Dreams
W. E. B. Du Bois, “General Strike,” from Black Reconstruction
George Rawick, “Racism and Slavery,” from From Sundown to Sunup
W. E. B. Du Bois, “Back Toward Slavery” from Black Reconstruction
Pete Daniel, “The Metamorphosis of Slavery, 1865-1900”
Saidiya Hartman, “The Burdened Individuality of Freedom” from Scenes of Subjection

Week 3: Ghetto
Saidiya Hartman, Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments (excerpts)
Loïc Wacquant, “From Slavery to Incarceration”
Richard Rothstein, “Public Housing, Black Ghettoes” & “Racial Zoning” from The Color of Law
Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, interview on Why Is This Happening? with Chris Hayes (podcast)

Week 4: Prison
Tony Platt, Chaps. 1-3, Beyond These Walls: Rethinking Crime and Punishment in the United States
George Jackson, Soledad Brother and Blood in My Eye (excerpts)
Brett Story, “The Prison in the City: Securitizing Property in Bankrupt Detroit”
Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Intercepted* podcast (part 1)
-- “Globalization and US Prison Growth”
-- “From the Military-Industrial Complex to the Prison-Industrial Complex”
-- “Prisons and Class Warfare”

**Week 5: Abolition**
Mariame Kaba, *We Do This Til We Free Us* (excerpts) and/or

**please note: readings may change**

**ASSIGNMENTS**

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

2) A reading journal. Before each class, you’ll write one-page (~250 words) that includes your thoughts and reactions to the readings. These must be submitted *the night before* class. These are low-stakes writing assignments. They’re an opportunity for you to reflect on the readings and begin to put some ideas on the page before we meet. You can also include your reactions to class discussion and draw connections to other texts (whether you encounter those inside or outside class.) I encourage you to use these as a springboard for participating in class discussions. [50%]

3) For your final (10 pages), you will address a literary or cultural text or a historical moment or movement, which you choose, as it pertains to our semester’s readings and discussions about captivity, enclosure, and racialization. Your chosen text/topic 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 semester’s themes in a context that speaks to you. I am open to alternative/creative projects, though they must be as rigorous as any term paper you would write. 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