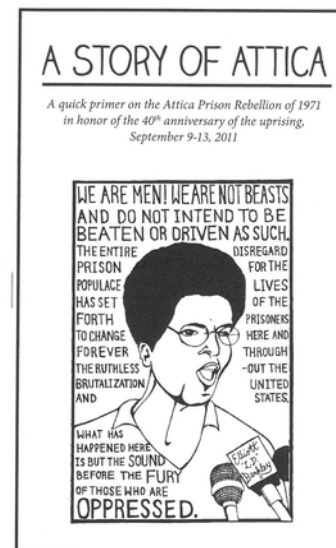


INCARCERATED STORIES: DOCUMENTING IN/JUSTICE
SYLLABUS – THEA114 – January 8-16 (Meeting Virtually on Zoom)
Winter Session, 2022 – Professor Jenkins
rjenkins@wesleyan.edu

****NO PREVIOUS THEATER EXPERIENCE IS REQUIRED FOR THIS COURSE****

Course Overview

Students in "Incarcerated Stories: Documenting In/Justice" will collaborate with formerly incarcerated rap poets, gospel singers, and actors to create performances of theater and music based on interviews, trial transcripts, prison memoirs, and other texts related to mass incarceration. Students will learn how to apply their skills as writers, performers, or musicians to community service and activism as they learn about the United States' criminal justice system and its position at the heart of systemic racism in America. The class will be taught remotely. Presentations generated by the students and their formerly incarcerated partners will be disseminated as widely as possible, with the objective of amplifying marginalized voices to raise awareness of mass incarceration's social impact and the need for carceral reform. Due to the collaborative nature of this course daily online attendance is required.



Winter 2022 Specifics

Wesleyan students and our formerly incarcerated partners will collaborate on generating a performance that focuses that connects the experiences of currently and formerly incarcerated individuals with events related to the Attica Prison Uprising and the history of criminal justice going back to descriptions of medieval injustices recounted in "The Divine Comedy" by Dante Alighieri, himself a convicted criminal who wrote his epic while under a penalty of death. These sources will be combined with verbatim excerpts transcribed from interviews conducted with our formerly incarcerated guests during each week's zoom class session. Music will be used to heighten the impact of the stories told by our guests.

Daily Assignments

1. A one-page monologue combining a verbatim story from a class guest with:
 - A. A verbatim quote from a historic source related to the Attica Uprising
 - B. A line of poetry from Dante's "Divine Comedy"
 - C. Lyrics from a song (rap, gospel, pop, folk, etc.) that enhances the script's theme
2. These materials will be read aloud and form the basis of each class discussion

Final Assignment

1. A five-hundred-word paper that discusses the connections between the guest's story, Dante's poem, the chosen song, and the issues raised by the Attica uprising. The paper should include quotes from our required texts, Blood in the Water and The New Jim Crow, as well as quotes from online primary sources.
2. Students will present a three-minute monologue in collaboration with one of the class guest participants

Required Viewing

Attica (This 1974 Documentary can be viewed by googling “Attica Documentary Firestone”
Or by going to the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG1f7FzgXY8>

Required Reading

Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 & its Legacy by Heather Ann Thompson
The New Jim Crow by Michelle Alexander

(These three required primary sources can be found free online at the links below their title)

Attica: The Official Report of the NYS Special Commission on Attica
<https://nysl.ptfs.com/awweb/pdfopener?sid=F8D4ED8A91235A51D38FAB53AA80354F&did=132517&fl=%2FLibrary1%2Fpdf%2F14815273.pdf>

An Attica Story

<https://niastories.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/attica-zine.pdf>

Court Documents from Trial to Compensate Attica Victims

<https://www.courtlistener.com/opinion/2577110/al-jundi-v-mancusi/>

Dante’s “Divine Comedy”

digitaldante.columbia.edu

Course Calendar

Sat Jan 8, 1-4pm & 6-9pm – Rap music, justice, and Attica

Sun Jan 9, 1-4pm & 6-9pm – Gospel music, justice and Attica

Mon Jan 10, 6-9:15pm- Rap music, justice and Dante’s Inferno

Tues Jan 11, 6-9:15pm- Gospel music, justice and Dante’s Inferno

Wed Jan 12, 6-9:15pm – Rap music, justice, and Dante’s Purgatory

Thur Jan 13, 6-9:15pm – Gospel music, justice and Dante’s Purgatory

Fri Jan 14, 6-9:15pm – Rap music, justice, and Dante’s Paradise

Sat Jan 15, 1-4pm & 6-9pm – Gospel music, justice and Dante’s Paradise

Sun Jan 16, 1-4pm & 6-9pm – Final Presetations

Grading

Assignments will be evaluated on the originality and depth of research into relevant primary sources, and the efficacy with which those sources are integrated into scripts and papers that provide insight into the ways in which the criminal justice system has impacted the lives of our guest partners and contemporary culture at large.

Students will be graded on their class participation which includes the oral presentation of a weekly script and song as well as fully engaging in dialogue with our guest partners.

Because of the collaborative and cumulative nature of our work in this course, daily attendance is required. Your guest partners will be depending on you each session.

Daily assignments – 33% of semester grade

Class Participation – 33% of semester grade

Final Presentation and Paper – 34% of semester grade

Assignment due to present in first class on January 8

View Attica documentary film at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG1f7FzgXY8>

Transcribe a hundred words from the BBC interview with BL Shirelle (see link below)

Choose a short quote from “An Attica Story” that connects to BL’s words (see link below)

Choose a short quote from Canto One of Dante’s Inferno that resonates with BL’s words

Choose a few lines from a song (rap, gospel, pop, folk) that heightens the impact of BL’s words

Combine these four elements into a two-minute presentation

Submit the four pieces of text by email to Professor Jenkins (rjenkins@wesleyan.edu)

Be ready to present your work in class and discuss the reasoning behind your choices

The source for the assignment can be found at the links provided below

BBC interview with BL Shirelle

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszd3g>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3cszdk0>

Link to “A Story of Attica”

<https://niastories.files.wordpress.com/2011/08/attica-zine.pdf>

Link to Dante’s text (choose ‘Divine Comedy,’ then ‘Inferno 1,’ then ‘text and translation’)

Digitaldante.columbia.edu

Time Commitment

While the exact time commitment for the class will vary individually and over the course of the semester, I recommend that you budget approximately three out-of-class hours for every class hour to complete the reading, assignments, homework, and project. I have designed the class so that it should be feasible to satisfactorily complete the requirements with approximately twelve hours per week of time commitment. If you are spending more time than this on a regular basis I encourage you to check in with me.

Accommodation Statement

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact [Accessibility Services](#) in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/218, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-2332).

Religious Observances

Faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required assignments/attendance. If this applies to you, please speak with me directly as soon as possible at the beginning of the term.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, ability, and nationality. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [the student code](#).

Discrimination and Harassment

Wesleyan University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. Wesleyan will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this Wesleyan policy, "**Protected Classes**" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact [the Office for Equity and Inclusion](#) at 860-685-4771. The [responsibility of the University Members](#) has more information.

Honor Code

All students of Wesleyan University are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the Honor Code](#) of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council – Office of Student Affairs. Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). The [Office of Student Affairs](#) has more information.