

Public Histories of Detention and Mass Incarceration

Fall 2015, Mondays, 12:35 – 3:35PM
Ruth Adams Building 018

Professor Andy Urban

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This unique course gives students the opportunity to work on a public history exhibition and series of digital projects, in collaboration with the [Humanities Action Lab](#), [New Jersey Digital Highway](#), [Newest Americans Project](#), and [Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center](#), on the history of detention and mass incarceration in the United States. The resulting projects will be exhibited online and in museums and galleries across country – from New York City to Riverside, California to Nashville, Tennessee. Our specific contribution to the project will focus on the history of Seabrook Farms, a frozen foods’ processing facility and company town in southern New Jersey that housed and employed Japanese American and Japanese Peruvian detainees, migrant agricultural laborers contracted from the Caribbean and U.S. South, German POWS, and Estonian and other Eastern European refugees displaced by World War II.

Complementing our work on the online exhibition, blog posts, and materials for the national travelling exhibition, the course will also examine more broadly the politics, economics, and social and cultural meanings of incarceration and detention – from the colonial era to the present – and the centrality of these practices to American history. Finally, this course will function as an advanced public history theory and methodology course. Using the Humanities Action Lab exhibition as a practical case study, we will address the possibilities and challenges that come with producing and disseminating histories for consumption outside of the classroom.

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American Studies Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students will learn to synthesize interdisciplinary sources and methods in order to analyze consumption as a form of politics, ideology, and citizenship. Students will learn to use scholarship in history, politics, literature, and art in order to understand the

significance of consumption to American culture and history. Students will be able to write well; speak articulately; and think critically, analytically, and creatively.

History Department Learning Goals Met by this Course:

Students who study history at Rutgers can expect to develop an understanding of the following concepts:

- 1.) How individuals are shaped by their own past and by the past of their society and institutions;
- 2.) The role of human agency in bringing about change in society and institutions;
- 3.) The operation of large-scale forces responsible for causing change over time;
- 4.) The role of diversity and difference in shaping human experience;
- 5.) The nature of cause-and-effect relationships in human affairs as they have played out over time and as they continue to operate in the present.

Students who study history at Rutgers can also expect to develop the following practical skills:

- 1.) The ability to read and understand a variety of literary forms, including primary sources, as well as secondary sources written in academic prose;
- 2.) The ability to analyze information effectively and to construct cause-and-effect relationships from disparate data sources;
- 3.) The ability to write persuasively and communicate effectively;
- 4.) The ability to work independently and to conduct independent research.

Learning Goals Specific to this Course:

- Students will learn about the theories and methodologies that inform the practice and study of public humanities and history work, and the specific issues associated with creating and disseminating narratives and interpretations that are intended for public audiences. In particular, the course will explore what it means to engage difficult, critical, and lesser-known histories and contemporary subjects, and what different publics stand to gain from public humanities and history projects that challenge audiences to consider topics from a critical vantage point.
- Students will learn about the tensions that exist between the production of history and humanities work for commercial, civic, and entertainment purposes; the funding issues, politics, and market pressures that drive the creation of certain types of narratives; and, efforts to make the past “usable” in legal debates and social activism.
- Students will gain practical skills and experience in: the creation of metadata; how to catalog and prepare digital images and texts for online exhibition; how to

collaborate and work as part of a project team; how to balance the interests of different stakeholders; and, what it means to participate as a blogger, curator, and scholar engaged in a pressing matter of public policy, national politics, and social justice campaigns.

Required Readings:

- Greg Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy: Japanese Confinement in North America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), ISBN # 9780231129237.
- Marie Gottschalk, *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), ISBN # 9781400852147.

In addition to the above books, all of the assigned chapters, articles, and primary sources that appear in the syllabus are posted as .pdf files on the course's SAKAI site under the heading "Resources." Readings should be completed prior to class.

Assignment and Grading Overview

Please see the attached "Assignment Breakdown/Deadline" document for additional information on the assignments and their deadlines.

HAL & NJDH Exhibitions - 50%

Minimedia Post for HAL - 15%

End-of-the-semester Reflexive Essay - 20%

Seminar Participation and Attendance - 15%

Grading Scale:

92-100=A; 87-91=B+; 81-86=B; 77-80=C+; 70-76=C; 60-69=D; 0-59=F

Note: there are no minus grades at Rutgers.

Class Policies

Please make sure that you are receiving and checking SAKAI announcements via email.

I regularly use the site to update class information, assignments, etc. You are responsible for keeping up-to-date with class information and making sure that you are connected.

Attendance in the seminar is mandatory.

Unexcused absences will result in a deduction from your attendance/participation grade.

If you have to miss class due to sickness, an emergency, or another excused reason, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

Special Accommodation Requests:

All special accommodation requests must be brought to my attention during the first two weeks of class. Full disability policies and procedures are available for review at: <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/>.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at <http://disabilityservices.rutgers.edu/request.html>

Academic Integrity Policy:

<http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml>

Violations include: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, denying others access to information or material, and facilitating violations of academic integrity. I take plagiarism very seriously, and will do all I can to fail you if you are caught violating this policy.

Honor Pledge:

I pledge on my honor that I will adhere to all aspects of the Rutgers Academic Integrity Policy

By accepting this syllabus and enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for knowing the above policies and the possible penalties – including suspension and expulsion – should you violate the Honor Pledge.

Take an interactive tutorial on Plagiarism and Academic Integrity:
<http://sccweb.scc-net.rutgers.edu/douglass/sal/plagiarism/Intro.html>

Course Schedule & Readings

Sept. 8 – Introduction to the Course and Projects

Sept. 14 - Seabrook Farms and Its Histories

Readings:

- “The Spinach King,” by John Seabrook, *New Yorker*, February 20, 1995, 222-235.
- Margaret Hermenia Gordon, “A Study of Migratory Labor at Seabrook Farms, 1941-1945,” MA Thesis, Atlanta University School of Social Work (1947), 17-47; 57-66.
- Barbara Tucker, “Agricultural Workers in World War II: The Reserve Army of Children, Black Americans, and Jamaicans,” *Agricultural History* 68, no. 1 (1994): 54-73.
- Cindy Hahamovitch, selections from *The Fruits of their Labor: Atlantic Coast Farmworkers and the Making of Migrant Poverty, 1870-1945* (1997), 3-13; 140-50; 182-99.

DH/NJDH Lab Workshops – 2:15 – 3:35*

* On four class meetings, indicated here in the syllabus, at 1:45PM we will break and travel to the Digital Humanities Lab (Alexander Library, Room 406-407). These workshops will train you in how to prepare archival documents for display as part of the NJDH online exhibition.

Sept. 21 – Seabrook Farms and Its Histories

Readings:

- Mitziko Sawada, “After the Camps: Seabrook Farms, New Jersey, and the Resettlement of Japanese Americans, 1944-47,” *Amerasia Journal* 13, no. 2 (1986-7): 117-36.
- “Seabrook Farms,” *Densho Encyclopedia*
http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Seabrook_Farms/ (please read online and explore interactive features)

- Lika C. Miyake, "Forsaken and Forgotten: The U.S. Internment of Japanese Peruvians During World War II," *Asian American Legal Journal* 9, no. 5 (2002): 163-93.
- Seiichi Higashide, "From a Barbed-wire 'Town' to a Chain-link Town," in *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps* (2000), 176-192.
- Gil Loescher and John A. Scanlan, "The Politics of Escape," in *Calculated Kindness: Refugees and America's Half-Open Door, 1945 to the Present* (1986), 25-48.

DH/NJDH Lab Workshops - 2:15 - 3:35

Sept. 28 - Critical and Engaged Public Humanities Work

Readings:

- Paul M. Farber, "National Museum of Crime & Punishment, Exhibit Reviewed," *Museums and Social Issues* 6, no. 1 (2011).
- Arthur J. Sabatini, "Museums and New Aesthetic Practices," *Museums and Social Issues* 6, no. 1 (2011).

Guest Lecturer, 2PM, Liz Sevcenko, Director, HAL

Oct. 5 - The Politics of Internment

Readings:

- Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy*, A Note on Terminology, Intro, chs. 1 & 2

DH/NJDH Lab Workshops - 2:15 - 3:35

Oct. 12 - The Politics of Internment

Readings:

- Robinson, *A Tragedy of Democracy*, chs. 4, 6, and 7

Oct. 19 – Mass Incarceration: Questions, Issues, and Problems

Readings:

- Gottschalk, *Caught*, chs. 1, 2 and 3
- ACLU Briefing Paper, “The Dangerous Overuse of Solitary Confinement in the United States” (2014)

DH/NJDH Lab Workshops - 2:15 - 3:35

Oct. 26 – Mass Incarceration: Questions, Issues, and Problems

Readings:

- Gottschalk, *Caught*, chs. 6 & 7
- Cody Mason, The Sentencing Project, “Too Good to be True: Private Prisons in America” (Jan. 2012)

Nov. 2 – Mass Incarceration: Questions, Issues, and Problems

Readings:

- Gottschalk, *Caught*, chs. 10, 11, 12
- Nick Pinto, “The Bail Trap,” *New York Times*, Aug. 13, 2015

***** Saturday, Nov. 7 – Field Trip to Eastern State Penitentiary *****

Nov. 9 – Exhibiting Incarceration

Readings:

- Michael Welch, “Penal Tourism,” in *Escape to Prison: Penal Tourism and the Pull of Punishment* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 1-25.
- Bruggeman, “Reforming the Carceral Past: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Challenge of Twenty-First-Century Prison Museums,” *Radical History Review* 113 (Spring 2012): 171-86.
- Nicole Fleetwood, “Posing in Prison: Family Photographs, Emotional Labor, and Carceral Intimacy,” *Public Culture* 27, no. 3 (2015): 487-511.

Nov. 16 - NO CLASS

Nov. 23 – Practicum

Workshopping final exhibition mock-ups with guest commenters; revisions.

Nov. 30 – Crimmigration

Readings:

- Juliet Stumpf, “Doing Time: Crimmigration Law and the Perils of Haste,” 58 *UCLA L. Rev.* 1705 (2011).
- Mark Dow, “Prologue” and “Invisibility, Intimidation, and the INS,” in *American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).
- Moustafa Bayoumi, “Preface” and “Rasha,” in *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem?: Being Young and Arab in America* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009).
- Elizabeth Detention Center Detainees, “A Letter from the Elizabeth Detainees,” 2007.
- Ruben Loyo and Carolyn Corrado, NYU School of Law and American Friends Service Committee, “Locked Up but not Forgotten: Opening Access to Family & Community in the Immigration Detention System,” 2010.

Dec. 7 - Theorizing Change

Readings:

- Miranda Joseph, "Accounting for Justice: Beyond Liberal Calculations of Debt and Crime," in *Debt to Society: Accounting for Life under Capitalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).