

an American prison history reading list.

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I was lucky to spend four straight semesters teaching some form of prison history at both Temple University and Garden State Youth Correctional Facility. In the course of that work, I found my students appreciated having a bibliography to jump start research projects. I know there is broad public interest in these kinds of topics as well, so I thought I would share the current iteration of my bibliography.

Some caveats: This list is by no means comprehensive. This is a work in progress and reflects an emergent field of study. As such, this list is interdisciplinary, but focuses primarily on books written by academic historians. Some works do not tidily fit the periods they are listed under, but have been placed there judiciously. It includes some works on crime, policing, and the death penalty, but is incomplete in those fields. It does not include books on wartime imprisonment and is short on books about political prisoners, immigration imprisonment, and books from the last couple years (I'm sorry I work so much) etc. This bibliography does not include a survey of journal literature because most people do not have access to academic journals. **I've only included books that I've read**, but not all of them. I privileged newer books and books that I really liked- books with good bibliographies of their own. Books that I would like

to read, books about jails, and documentaries are subjects for another day. This list, while not definitive, is at the very least sufficient to get your Amazon search focused.

I'd love it if you'd share your essential reads in the comments.

Theory

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 1977.

Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*, 2003.

Glenn C. Loury et. al, *Race, Incarceration, and American Values*, 2008.

Overview

Blake McKelvey, *American Prisons: A History of Good Intentions*, 1977.

Paul W. Keve, *Prisons and the American Conscience: A History of U.S. Federal Corrections*, 1991.

Lawrence Friedman, *Crime And Punishment In American History*, 1994.

Norval Morris and David Rothman, eds., *The Oxford History of the Prison*, 1997.

Regina Kunzel, *Criminal Intimacy: Prison and the Uneven History of Modern American Sexuality*, 2010.

The Early Republic

David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*, 1971.

Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835*, 1996.

Michele Lise Tarter and Richard Bell, eds., *Buried Lives: Incarcerated in Early America*, 2012.

The Emergence of the Modern Prison

Estelle B. Freedman, *Their Sisters' Keepers: Women's Prison Reform in America, 1830-1930*, 1984.

Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Partial Justice: Women in State Prisons, 1800-1935*, 1985.

Alexander Pisciotta, *Benevolent Repression: Social Control and the American Reformatory-Prison Movement*, 1994.

Anne M. Butler, *Gendered Justice in the American West: Women Prisoners in Men's Penitentiaries*, 1997.

Rebecca McLennan, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State, 1776-1941*, 2008.

Jennifer Graber, *The Furnace of Affliction: Prisons and Religion in Antebellum America*, 2011.

Caleb Smith, *The Prison and the American Imagination*, 2011.

Incarceration during Reconstruction and Jim Crow

Edward Ayers, *Vengeance and Justice*, 1985.

Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice The Work of Free Labor*, 1996.

Matthew J. Mancini, *One Dies, Get Another: Convict Leasing in the American South, 1866-1928*, 1996.

David Oshinsky, *Worse Than Slavery*, 1997.

Mary Ellen Curtin, *Black Prisoners and Their World: Alabama, 1865-1900*, 2000.

Douglas Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name*, 2009.

Progressive-Era Punishment and Reform

Jonathan Simon, *Poor Discipline: Parole and the Social Control of the Underclass, 1890-1990*, 1993.

Nicole Hahn Rafter, *Creating Born Criminals*, 1997.

David Rothman, *Conscience and Convenience: The Asylum and Its Alternatives in Progressive America*, 2002.

Michael Willrich, *City of Courts: Socializing Justice in Progressive Era Chicago*, 2003.

Kali N. Gross, *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880-1910*, 2006.

Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness*, 2010.

Cheryl D. Hicks, *Talk with You Like a Woman: African American Women, Justice, and Reform in New York, 1890-1935*, 2010.

Postwar Imprisonment and Crime

Gresham Sykes, *The Society of Captives: A Study of a Maximum Security Prison*, 1958.

James Jacobs, *Stateville: The Penitentiary in Mass Society*, 1977.

Malcolm Feeley and Austin Sarat, *The Policy Dilemma: Federal Crime Policy and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration*, 1980.

James Gilbert, *A Cycle of Outrage: America's Reaction to the Juvenile Delinquent in the 1950s*, 1986.

Daniel Glaser, *Preparing Convicts for Law-Abiding Lives: The Pioneering Penology of Richard A. McGee*, 1995.

Charles Bright, *The Powers that Punish: Prison and Politics in the Era of the "Big House," 1920-1955*, 1996.

Michael W. Flamm, *Law and Order: Street Crime, Civil unrest, and the Crisis of Liberalism in the 1960s*, 2005.

Kathleen A. Cairns, *Hard Time at Tehachapi: California's First Women's Prison*, 2009.

Volker Janssen, "When the 'Jungle' Met the Forest: Public Work, Civil Defense, and Prison, *Journal of American History* (December 2009).

Robert Perkinson, *Texas Tough*, 2010.

Ethan Blue, *Doing Time in the Depression: Everyday Life in Texas and California Prisons*, 2012.

Civil Rights and Social Movements in the American Prison

George Jackson, *Soledad Brother*, 1970.

Eric Cummins, *The Rise and Fall of California's Radical Prison Movement*, 1994.

Tom Wicker, *A Time to Die: The Attica Prison Revolt*, 1994.

Malcolm Feeley and Edward L. Rubin. *Judicial Policy Making and the Modern State: How the Courts Reformed America's Prisons*, 1998.

Donna Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California*, 2010.

Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance—A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*, 2010.

Lee Bernstein, *America Is the Prison: Arts and Politics in Prison in the 1970s*, 2010.

The Punitive Turn and the Rise of the Prison Industrial Complex

Katherine Beckett, *Making Crime Pay: Law and Order in Contemporary American Politics*, 1997.

Marie Gottschalk, *The Prison and the Gallows: The Politics of Mass Incarceration in America*,

Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, 2007.

Vanessa Barker, *The Politics of Imprisonment: How the Democratic Process Shapes the Way America Punishes Offenders*, 2009.

Loic Waquant, *Prisons of Poverty*, 2009.

Heather Thompson, "Why Mass Incarceration Matters: Rethinking Crisis, Decline and Transformation in Postwar American History" *Journal of American History*, (December 2010).

Joshua Page, *The Toughest Beat: Politics, Punishment, and the Prison Officers Union in California*, 2011.

Contemporary Incarceration and its Social Consequences

Katherine Beckett and Theodore Sasson, *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America*, 2000.

David Garland, *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*, 2002.

Meda Chesney-Lind and Marc Mauer, eds., *Invisible Punishment: The Collateral Consequences of Mass Imprisonment*, 2003.

Donald Braman, *Doing Time on the Outside: Incarceration and Family Life in Urban America*, 2004.

Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate*, 2006.

Bruce Western, *Punishment and Inequality in America*, 2007.

Todd Clear, *Imprisoning Communities*, 2009.

Suzanne Oboler, *Behind Bars: Latino/as and Prison in the United States*, 2009.

Jonathan Simon, *Governing Through Crime*, 2009.

Loïc Wacquant, *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*, 2009.

Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 2010.

David Garland, *Peculiar Institution: America's Death Penalty in an Age of Abolition*, 2010.

Lisa L. Miller, *The Perils of Federalism: Race, Poverty, and the Politics of Crime Control*, 2010.

Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Immigration Nation: Raids, Detentions, and Deportations in Post-9/11 America*, 2012.

Ernest Drucker, *A Plague of Prisons: The Epidemiology of Mass Incarceration in America*, 2013.

teaching

BOOKS ◀ **HISTORY** ◀ **MASS**
INCARCERATION ◀ **PRISON**
HISTORY ◀ **PRISONS**