

THE CONTENT OF THIS DESCRIPTION IS NOT A LEARNING CONTRACT AND THE INSTRUCTOR IS NOT BOUND TO IT. IT IS OFFERED IN GOOD FAITH AND INTENDED AS A HELPFUL GUIDE TO THE STUDENT.

TITLE: Police, Prisons, & the Justice of God

TERM: Spring 2021-2022

PROFESSOR: Derek Woodard-Lehman

CREDIT HOURS: 3

REGISTRATION: LIMITED TO:
AUDITORS: 5

UNLIMITED X
NO AUDITORS

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

One of the most pressing issues in contemporary US American public policy and public theology is policing and incarceration. Some are convinced that “law and order” must be maintained at all costs. Others are convicted that this same law and order constitute a “criminal injustice system” that is nothing other than a “new Jim Crow.” This course engages these debates and examines them in historical and social context. It attempts to overcome this impasse so that, in the words of Psalm 85, “justice and peace might embrace.” And it elaborates a practical response rooted in the resources of Christian dogmatics, ethics, and politics—especially those found in global Reformed theologies of resistance to domination and Catholic ethics of just war.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- Students will be conversant with biblical and theological principles for public theology; especially Reformed Christian conceptions of state and society, law and order, public justice and the common good, just war and political violence
- Students will be able to articulate the history and theology of Reformed Christian social criticism, civil disobedience, and political resistance; especially the European Reformations (Swiss, Dutch, English), the German Confessing Church, and the South African Confessing Church
- Students will be able to interpret scripture in order to construct norms, principles, and ideals for criminal justice within their own congregational and community contexts
- Students will be able to articulate how the words and work of past generations provide inspiration and instruction for present public witness and contemporary social ministry
- Students will be conversant with history, philosophy, and sociology of modern US American criminal justice
- Students will be familiar with the language and format of court decisions, public policy, and statistical data reporting
- Students will be able to articulate the place of public witness and social ministry within their vocational identity

PREREQUISITES: None

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS/READING:

- Michelle Alexander. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. 978-1620971932 (**\$14.24**)
- Heather MacDonald. *The War on Cops: How the New Attack on Law & Order Makes Everyone Less Safe*. 978-1594039683 (**\$14.99**)
- Ben Jones ed. *The Ethics of Policing: New Perspectives*. 1479803731 (**\$35.00**)
- John Pfaff. *Locked in: The True Causes of Mass Incarceration and How to Achieve Real Reform*. 978-0465096916 (**\$17.41**)
- Kelly Brown Douglas. *Stand Your Ground: Black Bodies & the Justice of God*. 626981094 (**\$19.59**)
- Franklin E. Zimring. *When Police Kill*. 0674986806 (**\$19.95**)

ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

- Attendance and prepared participation
- Initiation and facilitation of one Roundtable discussion focused on the texts and themes for that week
- Two short (1,500-2,000 word) essays
- A Final Project that may take the form a traditional term paper (6,000 words) or a comparable creative project

ATTENDANCE: Required