

## Behind Bars: Cross-Cultural Representations of Prison in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

University of Pittsburgh  
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures  
SLAV 1225/7050 CRN 25858



Fall 2012

Class Meets: W 6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

Location: 213 CL

Instructor: Dr. Joel Brady

Office: 615 Alumni Hall

Office hours: Wed 8:30 PM – 9:30 PM

Thurs 12 PM – 1 PM

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### Course Description

This course examines cultural artifacts produced *in* and *about* prison during the twentieth century. It addresses the *function* of art within prison as escapism and a survival technique, while considering also the *content*, *form*, and *historical context* of those productions. It also explores the allure of the prison world as a form of entertainment. The course consists of three parts: (1) the forced-labor camp system in the Soviet Union known as **the Gulag**; (2) **Holocaust concentration camps** in Europe; and (3) the **American prison system**. This course will also frequently reference cultural representations from other historical contexts, including especially internments in Austria-Hungary, Canada, the United States, and Japan during the twentieth century's two world wars.

Analyzing cultural products from prisons allows for discussion of key philosophical issues of human existence, often centered on a system of dichotomies, such as freedom vs. captivity, mind vs. body, guilt vs. innocence, master vs. slave. The course provides the opportunity to compare not only *cultures*—American, Russian, German/East European, and others—but also the variety of prison experience according to *race*, *gender*, and *religion*. Since the prison space provides a fertile ground for many different types of artistic expression, the course incorporates an assortment of media, including: literature, film, life-writing and journals, hagiography, songs, and even tattoos. Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Critically analyze the relationship between prison and its cultural productions.
- Assess the relevance of race, gender, and religion in experiences of imprisonment.
- Trace literary motifs relevant to the course through different works and time periods.
- Situate the cultural productions of imprisonment within their historical contexts.
- Draw comparisons between prison experiences across cultures/historical contexts.
- Produce a coherent, well-researched, well-reasoned, and well-supported final paper engaging in literary and cultural analysis.

### Credits, Prerequisites, and Format

This course carries three credits and satisfies the A&S requirements in literature and comparative foreign culture. The course has a demanding reading load and challenging writing assignments; it is an upper-level course best suited for juniors and seniors. This course also addresses a variety of controversial, sensitive, and even disturbing topics: students should be prepared to discuss them in a mature and intellectual manner.

The course meets once a week and combines lecture and discussion formats. Participation will be a vital component of the class, and students will be required to share their opinions and ideas. A successful course (and your own success in the course) will depend heavily upon everyone having completed the readings; regular, brief reading quizzes will be administered online before most classes to ensure that you have prepared sufficiently for class. I encourage every student to consult with me during my office hours regarding any concerns, questions, or ideas that they have about the course.

### Required Texts:

*The following books are available for purchase through the University Book Center.*

- Borowski, Tadeusz. *This Way for the Gas, Ladies and Gentlemen*. NY: Penguin Classics, 1992.  
Bouteneff, Vera. *Father Arseny, 1893-1973: Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father: Being the Narratives Compiled by the Servant of God Alexander Concerning His Spiritual Father*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1998.  
Davis, Angela. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* Toronto: Open Media, 2003.  
Levi, Primo. *Survival in Auschwitz*. NY: Touchstone, 1996.  
Shalamov, Varlam. *Kolyma Tales*. Trans. John Glad. NY: Penguin Classics, 1995.  
Spiegelman, Art. *Maus II: A Survivor's Tale*. NY: Pantheon, 1991.

### Course Requirements

Graded Work	
Online Reading Quizzes	10%
Participation Assignments	20%
3-page Response Papers (3)	30% (3 x 10%)
8-10 Page Final Paper	40%

### Grading Scale

A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+ 86-89	B 83-85	B- 80-82	C+ 76-79
C 73-75	C- 70-72	D+ 66-69	D 63-65	D- 60-62	F 59-0

### Important Dates

<b>Response paper #1 (Gulag)</b>	Oct. 3
<b>Final paper meetings w/professor</b>	Week of Oct. 11
<b>Share final paper topic with class</b>	Oct. 17
<b>Response paper #2 (Holocaust)</b>	Oct. 31
<b>Submit final paper outline/bibliography</b>	Nov. 14
<b>Response paper #3 (American prisons)</b>	Dec. 7
<b>Submit final paper</b>	Dec. 12

### *Reading Quizzes (10%)*

Regular, brief reading quizzes will be administered online—10 minutes each, consisting of 5 multiple-choice, factual questions. You must complete these quizzes by **NOON** on the day of class. For example, the first reading quiz, for the Sept. 5 class, must be completed by noon on Sept. 5. Quizzes are time-stamped by courseweb. You are welcome to study readings together with classmates, but you may NOT consult with them on the quizzes, themselves, or share answers. Each quiz is, on its own, relatively low-stakes and—I would suggest—not worth compromising your integrity. If you complete the readings, you should have no problem answering these factual (non-interpretive) questions. No make-up quizzes will be permitted: if you anticipate a problem completing the quiz, you should complete the readings and take the quiz well in advance of the noon deadline. You will drop your two lowest reading quiz scores.

### *Participation Assignments (20%)*

Successful class time relies upon your contributions as much as (if not more than) mine. I will appreciate your participation in class discussions and activities. To give everyone a fair chance to contribute, I will randomly call upon students to add their voices to class conversations, usually after providing some time to jot down a response to a question. If I call on you, you are welcome to “pass,” without penalty, should you wish to wait until a later time to speak up. The participation grade, itself, will be based upon actual in-class activities and homework assignments (small writing exercises, brief group presentations, and in-class quizzes).

### *3-page Response Papers (3) (3 X 10% = 30%)*

At the conclusion of each of this class’s three major units, you will submit a 3-page response paper to the readings covered in that unit (**Oct. 3, Oct. 31, Dec. 7**). You may choose to focus on one reading or several. These papers should demonstrate modes of analysis practiced during our class meetings, which correspond with the course objectives outlined above (e.g., analyzing the function of a particular cultural product, situating such a product in historical context, assessing the relevance of race, gender, ethnicity). I will provide you with feedback afterward, which I expect you to implement in subsequent response papers and the final paper. We will discuss further guidelines in class. I will evaluate these papers on the basis of a clear topic sentence, solid supporting evidence, and integration of skills practiced in class.

### *8-10 page Final Paper (40%)*

The final paper provides you with a more in-depth opportunity to demonstrate the skills you have developed over the course of the term and in your response papers. You will analyze a cultural representation of prison not included in the class materials. You may choose either (a) a representation of imprisonment in a historical context not treated in this class; or (b) a case from a historical context discussed in class (e.g., the Gulag), as long as the representation you select was not discussed in class. You must schedule an appointment with me during the **week of Oct. 11** to discuss your paper topic, share your topic with the class on **Oct. 17**, submit your outline and bibliography by **Nov. 14** (5 percentage points) and submit the final draft by **December 12** (35 percentage points). I will evaluate these papers on the basis of:

- Clear thesis/argument
- Solid supporting evidence
- Demonstration of specific skills practiced in class meetings
- Clear, logical organization
- Mechanics/writing style
- Originality

## Course Policies

### Attendance

Attendance in this class is required. You may miss two classes without penalty. Every subsequent unexcused absence will result in a 2% deduction from your final grade. Missing class will also likely result in the loss of participation points, and you are likely to find that your writing assignments will suffer, since those assignments rely upon skills practiced in class. I will take attendance at the beginning of class and after the break. Absence in one half of the class or the other will be counted as a full absence. Persistent tardiness (i.e., more than twice in a semester) may result in your being marked absent. If you will be absent or late, you must make every attempt to let me know beforehand, as soon as you know you will be absent. If you have a legitimate reason for missing class (medical, death in the family, approved university sports obligation, etc.), you must provide documentation which specifies the date(s) of class excused.

### Late Assignments

Unless you have made prior arrangements with me, late assignments will be penalized 10% per day late, up to 50%.

### Academic Integrity

*All students are expected to adhere to the standards of academic honesty. Any student engaged in cheating, plagiarism, or other acts of academic dishonesty, would be subject to disciplinary action. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in University Guidelines on Academic Integrity <http://www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html>. This may include, but is not limited to, the confiscation of the examination of any individual suspected of violating the University Policy. Furthermore, no student may bring any unauthorized material to an examination, including dictionaries and programmable calculators.*

It is imperative that you produce original work in this class and give credit to others when you use their work. If you have used someone else's work as a reference, you *must* cite, whether you have quoted them exactly or not. In other words, if you include a brief paraphrase of someone else's idea as an element in your paper, you *must* cite that reference. Papers that use someone else's ideas without attribution constitute plagiarism. Using parts of a paper you have submitted for a prior class, without noting this, also constitutes plagiarism. If you commit plagiarism or are caught cheating on a quiz, you will fail the class, no exceptions.

### Citations

You may use any standard citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago/Turabian, ASA, etc.) but your citations *must* adhere to one of these standard styles, which provide the full reference somewhere in your paper, in addition to specific page references. You may not just make up your own citation style. If you are not familiar with proper citation in an approved style, you must familiarize yourself, and you may wish to make an appointment with a librarian at Hillman: they will be happy to help you. Papers with improper citations will be returned to you for correction, with late penalties applied. You should question your sources critically—many online sources are not credible, and in my experience many online citations cited by undergraduates are not credible. I am aware that you may decide to consult Wikipedia to get a brief overview/introduction to a topic, as well as references to credible sources. That is perfectly acceptable. Wikipedia is not, however, a credible source, itself. Thus, while you may

use credible sources cited by Wikipedia, you may not use Wikipedia as a source in your paper. (In other words, do not cite Wikipedia, and no paraphrases from a Wikipedia page, please!). You should treat most websites, in general, as highly suspect. You will be on safer ground with articles that you obtain through a search in JSTOR or GoogleScholar (though you should not limit your search to these or to purely online sources). As a rule of thumb, an online source is more likely to be credible if you are able to walk over to Hillman library and find the print version among the journals there.

#### *Student Disability Services*

If you require special accommodations or classroom modifications, please notify both the professor and Disability Resources and Services by the end of the first week of the term. The office of Disability Resources and Services is located in 140 William Pitt Union (648-7890 [voice or TDD]), and their website is at: [<http://www.drs.pitt.edu>]. If you have a physical, learning, or emotional disability, please let me know as early as you can so that I can accommodate you.

## Course Schedule

*Note:* I will make every effort to hold to this schedule of readings and classes, but I do reserve the right to make scheduling changes, including the addition or subtraction of readings. However, I will announce any such changes at least one week in advance, in-class and via courseweb.

<b>PART I: Russia</b> <b>The Criminal, Political, and Religious Prisoner in the Soviet Gulag</b>		
<i>Day</i>	<i>General Theme &amp; Homework Due That Day</i>	<i>In-Class Discussion Topics</i>
Aug 29	<p><b>INTRODUCTION, SYLLABUS and THE CRIMINAL PRISONER</b></p> <p>In-class film: <i>Mark of Cain</i></p> <p>HW: No homework due today. *Complete <i>sample</i> reading quiz online by noon, Aug. 31</p>	<p>–Functions of art in prison –Purpose of prison?</p> <p>--Introduction to the Gulag –criminal body as text –secret language of prison tattoos</p>
Sept 5	<p><b>THE CRIMINAL PRISONER (cont'd) and THE POLITICAL PRISONER</b></p> <p>HW: *<i>Russian Tattoo Encyclopaedia</i> (intro/images) *Remainder of <i>Mark of Cain</i> * <i>Gulag Archipelago</i> (565-615) *<i>Kolyma Tales</i> (3-49) *1<sup>st</sup> online reading quiz by noon, Sept 5 (complete all quizzes by noon on day of class)</p>	<p>--Gulag tattoos revisited –The historical approach –Testimony and its challenges –Comparison with <i>One Day in the Life of...</i></p> <p>–The male narrative: Solzhenitsyn vs. Shalamov –Fiction vs. “facts”: what better represents the experience?</p>
Sept 12	<p><b>THE POLITICAL PRISONER (cont'd) and FEMALE PRISONER</b></p> <p>HW: *<i>Kolyma Tales</i> (68-79, 107-13, 173-83, 284-91) *<i>Remembering the Darkness</i> (Ch 4) *<i>Till My Tale is Told</i> (Ch 1, pp 1-28; Ch 15)</p>	<p>–loyalty in the camps –Identity and self-definition – “remaining human” –Special advantages in camps</p> <p>–Relating women’s experiences to the Gulag –Arrest and interrogation</p>
Sept 19	<p><b>THE FEMALE PRISONER (cont'd) and THE RELIGIOUS PRISONER</b></p> <p>HW: *<i>Remembering the Darkness</i>(Chapters 16, 18) *<i>Till My Tale is Told</i> (11) *<i>Gulag Voices</i> (8) *<i>Father Arseny I</i></p>	<p>–Women’s Gulag experience -- pregnancy, rape, health care –Differences between male/female narratives</p> <p>- Orthodox Christianity in USSR - <i>samoizdat</i> -forms of submission</p>

<p>Sept 26</p>	<p><b>RELIGIOUS PRISONER, cont'd</b></p> <p>In-class screening of <i>Solovki Power</i> (If you are not in class, you must watch in Hillman.)</p> <p>HW: *<i>Father Arseny II</i> *Peter Bouteneff, "Father Arseny: Fact or Fiction?" (30-min. podcast): <a href="http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/sweeter/father_arseny_fact_or_fiction">http://ancientfaith.com/podcasts/sweeter/father_arseny_fact_or_fiction</a> *Motovilov, "St. Seraphim's Transfiguration in the Holy Spirit" <a href="http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/47867.htm">http://www.pravoslavie.ru/english/47867.htm</a> *Select Russian hagiographies</p>	<p>-Religious approaches to suffering -Religion and art -Biography/Hagiography/Fiction</p> <p>-How documentary film helps us to understand the Gulag</p>
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<b>PART II: Europe and the Holocaust</b> <b>Representations and Testimony: Culture and the Concentration Camp</b>		
<p>Oct 3</p>	<p><b>THE CLASSIC TESTIMONY</b></p> <p>HW: *<i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> ("Author's Preface" -"The Drowned and the Saved" [approx. 9-100]) <u>Gulag Response Paper due</u></p>	<p>Introduction to the Holocaust</p> <p>-Representing the Holocaust: specific challenges -Discussion of life-writing and current theories -Preserver/distorter: dual role of the memoir</p>
<p>Oct 11</p>	<p><b>THE CLASSIC TESTIMONY (cont'd) and NON-JEWISH PRISONERS</b></p> <p>HW: <i>Survival in Auschwitz</i> ("Chemical Examination"-end [approx.101-73]) HW: <i>Mosaic of Victims</i>(available online through PittCat) (Required: Chapters 8, 16; Optional: 14-15, 18-21) <b>Student meetings to discuss paper topics</b></p>	<p>-Issues of memory -Comparison with Gulag testimonies -Comparison with other Holocaust memoirs</p> <p>-Differences between Jewish and non-Jewish prisoners (experiences and narratives)</p>
	<p><b>FICTION VS. TESTIMONY</b></p> <p>HW: Tadeusz Borowski stories*</p>	<p>-Fiction vs. testimony: similarities and differences -Can we compare the Gulag</p>

Oct 17	(29-49, 82-97, 98-142, 177-80) <b>Be prepared to share your paper topic in class!</b>	and concentration camps? –Freedom vs. captivity, inside vs. outside –The Holocaust as “normal”
Oct 24	<b>NEW APPROACHES IN REPRESENTING THE HOLOCAUST</b>  HW: <i>Maus II</i> , 41-117*; <i>Life is Beautiful</i>	–Introduction to representing the Holocaust in film –Approaching the Holocaust with comedy: offensive or penetrating?
<b>Transition: World War I and II internments</b>		
Oct 31	<b>THE ETHNORELIGIOUS POLITICAL PRISONER:</b>  <b>No class on Oct. 31</b> <b>Instead, you will <u>attend the public talk, Friday, Nov. 2:</u></b> <b>Lubomyr Luciuk on Canadian interment of “Ukrainians”</b>  <u>HW: Holocaust Response Paper Due by Oct. 31</u> *“From Canadian Hell” *“What Life is like for People in Canadian Captivity” (read before Nov. 2 talk, and reread for class Nov. 7)	
November 7	<b>THE ETHNORELIGIOUS POLITICAL PRISONER and ENEMY ALIENS</b>  HW: *Selection: <i>Talerhof Almanacs</i> *Reread Canadian internment readings *Selections: <i>Imprisoned Apart</i> *Selections: <i>They Called us White Chinese</i>	-WWI internment of “Russians” in Austria-Hungary; “Austro-Hungarians” in Canada -WWII internment of Japanese in U.S./Westerners in China --Wartime internments and civil liberties --race, ethnicity, ethnoreligiosity, citizenship, and loyalties to the state



<b>Part III: America From Anarchists to Chain Gangs, from Pulp Fiction to Crime Film</b>		
Nov 14	<p><b>TURN OF THE CENTURY:FEAR OF THE OTHER; <i>and</i> 1910S-1920S:THE CHAIN GANG</b></p> <p>HW: <i>*Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist</i> (95-158)  <i>*I Am a Fugitive from a Georgia Chain Gang</i> (37-81)  <u>*Final Paper outline/ bibliography due</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Introduction to prison in America</li> <li>-Fear of anarchy as the “other;” Ukrainian anarchist vs. Pittsburgh industrialist</li> <li>-Industrialization/inequality</li> <li>-chain gangs</li> <li>-Issues of race</li> <li>-Birth of the blues: slavery, chain gang, and prison songs</li> <li>-labor and song</li> <li>-Social justice and chain gang</li> </ul>
Nov 21	<b>NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING RECESS</b>	
Nov 28	<p><b>PRISON AND THE CRIMINAL ALLURE IN THE 1930S AND 1940S; THE 1960S FILM AND SENSATIONALISM</b></p> <p>HW: Chester Himes “Prison Mass”  <i>Cool Hand Luke</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Himes and prison creativity</li> <li>-Beginning artistic careers in prison</li> <li>-Popularity of pulp fiction and crime comics</li> <li>- Prison on the big screen</li> <li>-1960s representations</li> </ul>
Dec 5	<p><b>THE 1960S, 70s and 80s: PRISON LETTERS <i>and</i> FINAL QUESTIONS</b></p> <p>HW: <i>*Soledad Brother</i> (232-250), <i>In the Belly of the Beast</i> (135-154)  <i>*PrisonWritings: My Life Is My Sun Dance</i> (1-39)  <i>*Are Prisons Obsolete?</i>  <u>*American Prison Response Paper Due on December 7</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Issues of race –beyond black and white</li> <li>-Impact of prison writing</li> <li>-Course wrap-up: ideas and conclusions</li> </ul>
<b>Final Deadline</b>		<b>December 12: Final Paper</b>