



INCARNATION & INCARCERATED BODIES TH3460

**SPRING 2019 – Princeton Theological Seminary
2:00 – 4:50 a.m. Monday**

Instructor: Mark Lewis Taylor

Teaching Assistant: Juan Carlos Limón, Jr.



AIMS

Note: "Aims" are the general goals of the course, which will permeate all that we do and be treated in specific parts of the course. It is also hoped that these aims are such that students will continue working on them, in some manner, beyond the end of the semester.

1. To examine the *political dimensions of Christology*, as they illumine issues relating to contemporary mass incarceration in the United States.
2. To assess *present Christian practices and resources* by which Christians are engaging contemporary U.S. prison institutions and life.
3. To develop nuanced *criticism of theological discourse's abstraction* from political arenas and concrete sites of suffering, zones of social abandonment.
4. To analyze the meanings and persuasiveness of the *"becoming human" of the divine logos* in relation to the human suffering of long prison sentences, isolation and abandonment, rape, torture and accompanying despair all in the context of the U.S. Prison (Inter)State.
5. To focus and develop Christian theological beliefs and practices as *resources of hope* for facing the social, economic – political - conditions fraught with "incarcerated bodies."
6. To explore ways of building *bridges and coalitions between church and wider public organizations and movements.*

OUTCOMES

Note: "Outcomes" differ from "Aims," because they articulate what more precisely it is hoped that course participants will be able to show at end of semester.

1. Course participants will show awareness of, and ability to analyze, the extent of various *practices of incarcerating bodies* in U.S. history and in contemporary practice and policy. (Evaluated through the Midterm requirement)
2. Course participants will display skills of *critical theological dialogue* and engagement between Christian traditions (beliefs, practices, symbols), on the one hand, *and* the suffering and institutional practices of incarceration, on the other. (Evaluated through the Final Paper requirement)
3. Course participants will demonstrate ability to work in groups on issues of mass incarceration, in a way that involves dimensions of inter-faith, ecumenical, and church/society work. (Evaluated by assessment of course members' participation in Student Panel discussions and Project groups.)

REQUIREMENTS

Note: The instructor will provide fuller explanation of each of these requirements during class. See also the end of Syllabus for PTS general requirement standards for our classes, page 12.

1. On-time regular attendance at all class sessions (let me know if you cannot attend a class). Coming to class with assigned readings completed – accept for the first week - so that you are ready to be an active participant, as listener and/or contributor, to class dialogue. (15 percent of final course grade; small, but often a key swing factor for borderline cases)
2. The Incarceration Midterm Paper: This will be a 6-8-page paper (typed, double-spaced), which (a) selects one particular aspect, dimension or issue of contemporary incarceration, and then (b) relates it analytically to the larger context of U.S. incarcerating practice, i.e. the rise of “the penal state” in the U.S. (30 percent) **Due by 5pm on the first Thursday after the Spring Reading Period, March 14.**
3. The Theology Final Paper: This will be a 6-8-page paper (typed, double-spaced), which takes some belief or practice of Christian theology, usually in Christology, developing it as a resource for both critical resistance and hope in relation to some dimension of contemporary U.S. incarceration as you have come to understand it in this course. (30 percent) **Due by end of semester on May 6, but note if you are graduating at end of this semester your paper is due on May 3. And recall, all final papers are to be uploaded to Blackboard.**
4. Student Panel Presentation. Make a 3-5 minute presentation **either** on *one* of the four student *Issue Panels* scheduled for this course **or** on one of the four *Literary Lives Panels*. These panels will take place in the second-hour of our Monday plenary sessions. (25 percent) The topics are as follows (the dates are embedded in the syllabus Agenda):

Literary Lives Panel 1 – Susan Burton and Cari Lynn, *Becoming Ms. Burton*

Issues Panel 1 – Prisons, Police, the Death Penalty: Problems of a “Carceral State”?

Literary Lives Panel 2 – Jimmy Santiago Baca, *A Place to Stand*

Issues Panel 2 – Interpreting the “Crucified Jesus:” Grappling with Its Meaning

Literary Lives Panel 3 – James Baldwin’s *If Beale Street Could Talk*

Issues Panel 3 - Reconstructing Christian Belief in the U.S. Carceral State

Literary Lives Panel 4 – Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection*

Issues Panel 4 - Organizing as Christians (with others) in the U.S. Carceral State

COURSE PROCEDURE

General Class Sessions. *The three-hour block* of class time on Monday afternoons will, in the first four weeks, be used for instructor's lectures, audio-visual work and class dialogue. Then starting on Feb 25 we will have student panels for the second half of the afternoon (see "Requirements," number 4).

Logic of the Course Reading. For the logic at work in the layout of readings in the course, please read the introductory paragraphs to Part I and II of the Agenda.

TEXTS

SPECIAL NOTE: Do not purchase all of these books right away. During the first class session, I will offer more insight about the texts that will aid in decision-making about purchase, especially regarding the Abu-Jamal texts immediately below.

Basic Texts

ABU-JAMAL, Mumia. *Faith of Our Fathers:*

_____ . *Live from Death Row.* Addison-Wesley Pub., 1995

_____ . *Have Black Lives Ever Mattered.* City Lights, 2017.

_____ . *We Want Freedom: A Life in the Black Panther Party.* PM Press,

_____ . *Death Blossoms: Reflections by a Prisoner of Conscience.* Plough, 1996.

ALEXANDER, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color-Blindness.* The New Press, 2010.

BAUER, Shane. *American Prison: A Reporter's Undercover Journey into the Business of Punishment.* Penguin Press, 2018.

GILLIARD, Dominique DuBois. *Rethinking Incarceration: Advocating for Justice that Restores.* IVP, 2018.

GOTTSCALK, Marie. *Caught: The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics.* Princeton University Press, 2016.

HENGEL, Martin. *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross.* Fortress Press, 1977.

RICHIE, Beth E. *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America's Prison Nation.* NYU Press, 2012.

TAYLOR, Mark Lewis. *The Executed God: The Way of the Cross in Lockdown America.* 2nd and Expanded Edition. Fortress Press, 2015. (All assignments from this 2nd edition)

Imprisoned Lives Literature

(course members normally just buy the one on which they choose to present on panel)

BACA, Jimmy Santiago. *A Place to Stand*. A memoir. Grove Press 2002.

BALDWIN, James. *If Beale Street Could Talk*. A novel, 1974. Vintage 2006.

BURTON, Susan, with Cari Lynn.. *Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women*. The New Press, 2017.

TOLSTOY, LEV. *Resurrection*. A novel, 1899. English translation by Louise Maud. Oxford World's Classics. Oxford University Press 2009.

Some Texts for Organizing

HUNTER, Daniel *Building a Movement to End the New Jim Crow: An Organizing Guide*. Hyrax Publishing, 2015.

VETERANS OF HOPE, *The New Jim Crow Study Guide and Call to Action*. Lulu.com Press, 2016.

(The above and other Study Guides by church and other groups [available here](#).)

AGENDA

PART ONE – PRACTICES & THEATRICALS OF U.S. INCARCERATION

After a general introduction to the course themes in the first week, the next two weeks involve an interrogation of the theological meanings of “incarnation” and “the death of Jesus.” We then proceed on Feb. 20, with several weeks that offer a portrait of the structures and dynamics of mass incarceration and its politics, giving special attention to “theatricals” of incarceration. The multidimensional experience of imprisonment for the incarcerated - as individual, familial and social experience - will be set in political contexts of the coloniality of power and of U.S. geopolitical struggle today. At work throughout you will see the constructs of race, gender and sexuality.

Jan 28 THEOLOGY AND THEATRICALS OF THE U.S. PENAL STATE:

“God?” and “Crucified - Executed, Lynched, Bombed ? [102 pages]

Alexander, “Acknowledgments,” “Preface,” and “Introduction,” in *The New Jim Crow*. ix-xi, xiii, 1-19.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 1-22 (Introducing undercover Bauer & a Private Prison Pastor)

Gottschalk, “The Prison State and the Lockdown of American Politics,” in *Caught*, 1-22.

Taylor, “Preface to the Second Edition,” and “Preface,” in *The Executed God*, xi-xxii, xiii-xxx.

Feb 4 “THEOLOGY, THEO-POLITICS” & INTERPRETIONS OF JESUS’ DEATH

[133 pages, very accessible reading]

Abu-Jamal, “Life’s Religion,” in *Death Blossoms*, 34-8.

Taylor, “Introduction,” *The Executed God*, 1-51.

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, “Introduction,” 1-10.

Hengel, *Crucifixion*, “The Folly of the Crucified Son of God,” “Prometheus and Dionysus: the ‘Crucified and the ‘Crucifying’ God,” and “Docetism as a way of Removing the ‘Folly of the Cross,” 1-10, 11-14, and 15-21.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 23-74 (Bauer: From Prison Guard Training to Overseeing Prison Hell).

Recommended:

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet*, “Proclaimed by Women: The Execution of Jesus and the Theology of the Cross,” (97-128). [**Ereserve**]

Feb 11 “THEOLOGY AND INCARNATION: TOWARD A THEO-POLITICS OF INCARCERATION NATION [118 pp.]

Taylor, *The Executed God*, “Part I – The Theatrics of State Terror” (53-63) and Chapter 1: Lockdown America: A Theater of Terror,” 65-89.

“Out of the Mouths of Babes and . . .”

“Lockdown America: ‘Massifying’ Inequality and Big Business

“Theatrics of Terror: Six Dimensions

1. Time: the Devourer of Spirit’

2. The Bitter Gall of Injustice’

Richie, "Introduction," *Arrested Justice*, 1 -22, and "The Problem of Male Violence against Black Women," 23-64.

Gottschalk, "Show Me the Money," in *Caught*, 25-47.

Recommended:

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, "Three Overlooked Pipelines," "The School-to-Prison Pipeline," 60-75, 76-94.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet*, "The Oratory of Euphemia and the *Ekklēsia* of Wo/Men," 3-31. **On Reserve.**

Feb 18 MASS INCARCERATION IN A THEATRIC OF TERROR (117 pp)

Taylor, Chapter 1: Lockdown America: A Theater of Terror (cont.)," in *The Executed God*, 89-144.

"Theatrics of Terror: Six Dimensions" (cont.)

3. White Racism's Bitter Fruit: The Prison Spectacle"

4. Trans-Terror and a Culture of Rape"

5. US Militarized Policing"

6. Executions as State-Sanctioned Ritual Killing"

"Conclusion: Lockdown America as Threat to Us All"

Alexander, "The Rebirth of Caste," *The New Jim Crow*, 20-57.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 75-100 (From Slavery times to Bauer Today Wrestling with Demons of Prison Guarding).

**Feb 25 DECOLONIZING MASS INCARCERATION
Theatrics, Sacrifice & the Coloniality of Imperial Power
(134 pages)**

Taylor, Chapter 2: Theatrics and Sacrifice in the U.S.-Led Imperium, in *The Executed God* 145-165.

"Production, Punishment and the Sacrificial Myth"

"A Strengthened Elite Class in America"

Gottschalk, "Squaring the Political Circle: The New Political Economy of the Carceral State," 48-78

Alexander, "The Lockdown," *The New Jim Crow*, 58-94.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 101-149 (From Bauer's Final Training Days to Suicide Watch)

Literary Lives Panel 1
- *Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to*
Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women

[SPRING READING PERIOD - March 4 - 10]

Mar 11 PRISON NATION & PAX AMERICANA – Part I: “RACE”
U.S. Prisons and Military as White Apparatus or Regime (113pp)

Taylor, Chapter 2: Theatrics and Sacrifice in the U.S.-Led Imperium (cont.), in *The Executed God*, 165-194.

“The Carceral State and Managing Surplus Populations”

“How Penal State Terror Serves the Economically Powerful”

“Lockdown America and *Pax Americana*: A Destructive Synergy

“Conclusion: Surplus and Sacrifice in the US-Led Imperium

Alexander, “The Color of Justice,” *The New Jim Crow*, 95-136.

Gottschalk, “Is Mass Incarceration the “New Jim Crow”?, 119-20, 121-130, 132-38.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 150-76 (From Corporate Convict Leasing to Tortured “Leased” African-Americans).

Issues Panel 1 –
Prisons, Police, the Death Penalty: Problems of a “Carceral State”?

Mar 18 PRISON NATION & PAX AMERICA – Part II: GENDER & SEXUALITY
Bodies and a Politics of Cruelty in the Global Lockdown (109 pp)

Richie, “Black Women, Male Violence, and the Buildup of a Prison Nation,” in *Arrested Justice*, 99-124.

“Caging Deviance: Prisons as Queer Spaces,” in *Queer (In)justice: The Criminalization of LGBT People in the United States*, eds. Joey L. Mogul, Andrea J. -Ritchie, and Kay

Whitlock. Beacon Press, 2011. 92-117. [**E-reserves**]

Bauer, *American Prison*, 177-218 (From Guard 'Straight-Talk' to Chain Gangs, to Intimacy and Sexual Assault in Prison)

Recommended:

McCorkle, Jill A. "Preface" and "Acknowledgments" (ix-xv), "Introduction: Searching for Red's Self" (1-18), and "Conclusion: What If the Cure is Worse than the Disease?" (213-227) [**E-Reserves**]

**Literary Lives Panel 2 –
Jimmy Santiago Baca, *A Place to Stand***

Mar 25 TOWARD A POLITICAL ECONOMY OF RACIAL AND GENDERED CONTROL/REPRESSION ? (112pp)

Alexander, "The Cruel Hand," *The New Jim Crow*, 137-72.

_____. "The Matrix: A Black Feminist Response to Male Violence and the State," *Arrested Justice* (125-56) and "Conclusion" (157-66).

Hengel, *Crucifixion*: "Crucifixion as a 'barbaric' form of execution of the utmost cruelty" (22-32), and "Crucifixion as the Supreme Roman Penalty" (33-8), "Crucifixion and Roman Citizens" (39-45), "Crucifixion as a penalty for rebellious foreigners, violent criminals and robbers" (46-50), "The 'slaves' punishment" (51-63).

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, "Atonement and Sanctifying Retribution," 150-68.

**Issues Panel 2 –
Interpreting the "Crucified Jesus:" Grappling with Its Meaning**

PART TWO –

CHRISTOLOGY & PRACTICES TODAY

This Part begins a specific theological engagement of the issues encountered in the first Part. “Theology” here is an engagement of, a response to, a struggle with the issues of the contemporary period to which we were introduced above. This theological engagement will involve retrieval, deconstruction and reconstruction of key beliefs and practices in Christian theological histories. The focus will be especially on Christology, i.e. what is believed and practiced about Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ.

**Apr 1 “JESUS AND THE SOLDIERS OF EMPIRE” -
WAY OF THE CROSS AS “ADVERSARIAL POLITICS” (125pp)**

Taylor, Chapter 3: Way of the Cross as Adversarial Politics” in *The Executed God*, 203-60.

“The Galilean Jesus”
“Jesus and the Soldiers of Empire”
“How Adversarial was Jesus’ Politics?”
“Paul’s Anti-Imperial Grammar”
“Solidarity around a Revered, Seditious Criminal”
“Forging Alternative Communities and Empire”
“Mark’s Gospel: A Drama of Anti-Imperial Resistance”
“Confronting the Temple State”
“Dramatic Encounters with Empire”
“Dramatic Entry into Jerusalem”
“Conclusion: Being Adversarial/Christians at the Crossroads

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, 107-16.

Alexander, “The New Jim Crow,” in *The New Jim Crow*, 173-208.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 219-42 (from Prisoner-Run Prisons from Bauer’s Prison-Guard Blues).

**Literary Lives Panel 3 –
James Baldwin’s *If Beale Street Could Talk***

Apr 8 - **“STEALING THE SHOW” -
THE WAY OF THE CROSS AS “DRAMATIC ACTION”**
(112pp)

Taylor, Chapter 4: Stealing the Show: Way of the cross as Dramatic Action
in *The Executed God*, 261-88, 304-19.

- “How the Executed Jesus ‘Stole the Show’ ”
- “Sacrificing the Poor: Theatrical Spectacles of Fear and Fascination”
- “Jesus Death and the Myth of Redemptive Violence”
- “Dramatic Action: Bodies on the Line and Birthing New Worlds”
- “Stealing the Show as Power of ‘the Executed God’
- “Deep Power and Lockdown America”
- “Wider Power and Lockdown America”

Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, “The Fire Next Time,” 209-248.

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, “The Prisoners’ Pastor: Chaplaincy and
Theology’s Impact” 117-36, and “The Spirit of Punishment: Atonement,
Punishment and the Wrath of God,” 137-49.

**Issues Panel 3 –
Reconstructing Christian Belief in the U.S. Carceral State**

Apr 15 **THE WAY OF THE CROSS AS “BUILDING PEOPLES’ MOVEMENTS”**
I: Demilitarizing US Police and Decarcerating the USA (118 pp)

Taylor, Chapter 5: Building Peoples’ Movements – 1: Demilitarizing U.S. Police
and Decarcerating the USA,” in *The Executed God*, 321-96

- “Jesus and Peoples’ Movements”
- “The Jesus Movements: Those Impious Galileans”
- “Impious Galileans Today: Toward a ‘Liberating Material Spirituality’ ”
- “Demilitarizing US Police”
- “Decarcerating the USA: Toward ‘Abolition-Democracy’ ”

Critical Reviews provided of Taylor’s book by Joerg Rieger and Davina Lopez,
online at [THE SYNDICATE](#)

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, “Holy Interruptions: Dismantling Mass
Incarceration,” 186-99.

Bauer, *American Prison*, 243-73 (from Rev. Hutto’s Private Prisons to Bauer’s
Resignation as Prison Guard)

**Literary Lives Panel 4 –
Leo Tolstoy's *Resurrection***

Apr 22 **THE WAY OF THE CROSS AS “BUILDING PEOPLES’ MOVEMENTS”**
2: Abolishing Capital Punishment(s) (78pp)

Taylor, Chapter 6: Building Peoples’ Movements –
2: Abolishing Capital Punishment(s), in *The Executed God*, 397-449.

“The Death Penalty and US Carceral Violence”
“State Executions and the Genesis of a Counter-Theatric”
“The Role of the ‘Great Criminal’ ”
“Risks in Deploying the ‘Great Criminal’ Concept”
“The Movements for Mumia Abu-Jamal”
“Contemporary Jesus Followers and the ‘Great Criminal’ ”
Conclusion: “People on the Move with the Executed God”

*Critical Reviews of Taylor’s book by Michelle Alexander and
Marit Trelstad. Online at [THE SYNDICATE](#)*

Bauer, *American Prison*, 274-290.

Gilliard, *Rethinking Incarceration*, “Holy Interruptions: Dismantling Mass
Incarceration,” 186-99.

**Issues Panel 4 -
Organizing as Christians in the U.S. Carceral State**

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

NOTE: Determining Final Grades. This is always a difficult process and my grading method is not an exact science. This does not mean, however, that it is purely impressionist or subjectivist, either. The general rules of thumb are guided by the percentage weights given to requirements above. We will use a scale very close to what is recommended by PTS for determining letter grades from these percentages:

A	95-100
A-	90-94
B+	87-89
B	82-86
B-	79-81
C+	76-78
C	74-77
C-	70-73
D+	66-69
D	63-65
D-	60-62
F	0-59

OTHER PRINCETON SEMINARY COURSE GUIDELINES

PTS Academic Integrity Policy

As the *PTS Handbook* states, “Freedom of inquiry can flourish only in a community that recognizes that intellectual integrity in one’s academic work lies at the heart of its mission” (7.1). All students are expected to maintain integrity in all of their academic submissions and oral presentations and abide by the academic integrity policy. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to unattributed quotations, unattributed paraphrasing, unauthorized multiple submissions, false citations, and false submissions. Please refer to the *Handbook* for specific terms, definitions, and institutional policies related to the norms of academic integrity. Instructors are obliged to report any breach of academic integrity to the Associate Dean for Academic Administration.

Academic Support

The Office of Academic Support offers individualized instruction and workshops to guide PTS students towards more efficient and effective academic study skills and strategies. Professional staff provides free and confidential instruction in areas such as time/project management, academic reading and writing, exam preparation and test-taking strategies, and study strategies. To schedule an appointment, contact the office at academic.support@ptsem.edu or visit in person at Stuart Hall, B-16.

Accessibility Accommodations

PTS provides reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities who have self-identified through the Office of Academic Support. Students must register with the office (Stuart Hall, B-16 academic.support@ptsem.edu) for disability verification and determination of eligibility for reasonable academic accommodations. Requests need to be made at the beginning of the semester, or as soon as possible for newly approved students.

! Food in the Classroom

In keeping with the seminary's policy, no food will be allowed in the classroom. Beverages (i.e., water, soda, juice, tea, coffee, etc.) with lids are permitted (*PTS Handbook*, 9.4).