



ELECTIVE COURSE MANUAL

Carceral Geography: Law, Space, and Power

COURSE INSTRUCTOR

DR. PEERZADA RAOUF

Course Title

Carceral Geography: Law, Space, and Power

jis ko dekho vahī zanjīr-ba-pā lagtā hai
shahr kā shahr huā dāḳhil-e-zindān jānān

“Whoever I see seems to be in chains; the entire city has entered a prison, my love”

Ahmad Faraz

Course Description:

This interdisciplinary course critically examines the co-constitutive relationships between Space, Power, Law, and Carcerality. Drawing on foundational and contemporary scholarship in legal geography, carceral studies, and critical criminology, the course explores how law and spatial order produce, regulate, and contest carceral landscapes. While grounded in the Indian context, including colonial legal architectures, caste-based criminalization, and contemporary regimes of policing and confinement. This course engages with global theoretical frameworks to analyse how territory, sovereignty, and subjectivity are forged through legal and penal practices. Students will engage with diverse textual, visual, and ethnographic materials to develop a nuanced understanding of how Carcerality extends beyond the prison into everyday life, and how resistance and care reshape geographies of crime and law.

This theoretical course examines the intimate relationships between space and carceral power. Moving beyond the prison as a singular institution, we explore ‘Carcerality’ as a diffuse political-geographic logic that operates through techniques of surveillance, bordering, partitioning, and immobilization. The course is anchored in critical human geography and draws from carceral studies, political theory, and legal geography. We will trace the evolution of carceral space from the architectural prototype of the panopticon to the contemporary splintering of carceral functions across urban environments, borderlands, and digital networks. Key themes include the production of carceral territory through law and policing; the rise of biometric surveillance and algorithmic governance; and the spatial practices of resistance and abolition. Through close readings of foundational and contemporary theorists, this course equips students to critically analyse how carceral power is spatially organized, experienced, and contested.

This course will be driven by engagement with foundational theoretical debates, yet our exploration will extend beyond traditional academic texts. To fully illuminate the lived experience and cultural resonance of carceral power, we will analyse its manifestations and contestations in a variety of media. Our discussions will be enriched by critical viewings of films, readings of fiction and poetry, and analyses of popular media and songs, using these cultural artifacts as vital texts to understand how carceral space is imagined, reproduced, and challenged in the social world.

Unit 1: Foundations: Theorizing Carcerality, Space, and Power (2 weeks - 4 classes)

Essential Readings:

1. Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).
2. Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (1992): 3–7.

Media and Art:

1. Forman, Miloš, dir. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. 1975; United Artists, 1997.
2. Sartre, Jean-Paul. *The Wall and Other Stories*, trans. Lloyd Alexander (New York: New Directions, 1948).

Suggested Readings:

1. Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998.
2. Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
3. Rusche, Georg, and Otto Kirchheimer. *Punishment and Social Structure*. London: Routledge, 2017.
4. Rothman, David J. *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971.
5. Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2010.
6. Wacquant, Loïc. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.

Unit 2: The Architectures of Confinement: From Panopticon to the Hyper-Carceral Spaces (2 weeks - 4 classes)

Essential Readings:

1. Siddique, Nazimuddin. "Inside Assam's Detention Camps: How the Current Citizenship Crisis Disenfranchises Indians." *Economic and Political Weekly Engage*, February 15, 2020.
2. Jauregui, Beatrice. *Provisional Authority: Police, Order, and Security in India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016.
3. Al-Sousi, Nour. "Will I Ever Get Out?" In *Gaza Writes Back: Short Stories from Young Writers in Gaza, Palestine*, edited by Refaat Alareer, 71–74. Charlottesville, VA: Just World Books, 2014.

Media and Art:

1. Abrahamson, Lenny, dir. *Room*. 2015; Lionsgate Home Entertainment, 2016. (TBDL)
2. Weir, Peter, dir. *The Truman Show*. 1998; Paramount Pictures, 1999. (TBDL)
3. Gailey, Sarah. *The Echo Wife*. New York: Tor Books, 2021.

Suggested readings:

1. Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. Translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford: Blackwell, 1991.
2. Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
3. Wacquant, Loïc. *Punishing the Poor: The Neoliberal Government of Social Insecurity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009.
4. Roberts, Dorothy. *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: New Press, 2011.
5. Jefferson, Brian. *Digitize and Punish: Racial Criminalization in the Digital Age*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2020.
6. Foucault, Michel. *The Punitive Society: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1972-1973*. Translated by Graham Burchell. Edited by Arnold I. Davidson. New York: Picador, 2018.
7. Foucault, Michel. "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*. Translated by David Macey. New York: Picador, 2003.
8. Hervey, Katherin dir. *The Prison Within*. 2020; First Run Features, 2020.
9. Cordeiro, Ramiro Ledo, dir. *The Panopticon*. 2012; Sétima, 2012.
10. Henckel von Donnersmarck, Florian, dir. *The Lives of Others (Das Leben der Anderen)*. 2006; Sony Pictures Classics, 2007.
11. Sawhney, Nakul Singh, dir. *A Million Churnings*. 2024; Documentary series.

Unit 3: Law's Cartography: Producing Carceral Subjects and "Illegal" Spaces (2 weeks - 4 classes)

Essential Readings:

1. Weizman, Eyal. *Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability*. New York: Zone Books, 2017.
2. Ghertner, Asher D. "Nuisance Talk and the Propriety of Property: Middle-Class Discourses of a Slum-Free Delhi." *Antipode* 44, no. 4 (2012): 1161–1187.
3. Caldeira, Teresa P. R. *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.
4. Das, Veena. "The Figure of the Abducted Woman: The Citizen as Sexed." In *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, 35–64. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.

Media and Art:

1. Spielberg, Steven, dir. *Minority Report*. 2002; 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2004.
2. Kafka, Franz. *The Trial*. Translated by Breon David Wylie. Project Gutenberg, 1925.

Suggested Readings:

1. Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2010.
2. Simon, Jonathan. *Governing Through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
3. Roberts, Dorothy E. *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1997.
4. Sennett, Richard. *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1994.
5. Tarlo, Emma. *Unsettling Memories: Narratives of the Emergency in Delhi*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
6. DuVernay, Ava, dir. *13th*. 2025; Netflix, 2025.
7. Nicks, Peter, dir. *The Force*. 2017; Kino Film Collection.
8. Furst, Jenner, dir. *Time: The Kalief Browder Story*. 2017; Spike/BET. Documentary series.
9. Selvon, Sam. *The Lonely Londoners*. London: Longman, 1956.

Unit 4: Caste, gender and everyday Carcerality (3 weeks - 6 classes)

Essential Readings:

1. Pinjra Tod. "Open Letter to the Vice Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia." Letter, *The Wire*, March 29, 2019.
2. Sukanya, Shantha. "When 'Bandi' Is Both a Game and Life: The Children of India's Women Prisoners." *The Wire*, August 1, 2022.
3. Balagopal, K. "Deaths in Police Custody: Whom and Why do the Police Kill?" *Economic and Political Weekly*, November 22, 1986.
4. Teltumbde, Anand. *The Persistence of Caste: The Khairlanji Murders and India's Hidden Apartheid*. London: Zed Books, 2010.
5. Nigam, Sanjay. "Disciplining and Policing the 'Criminals by Birth', Part 1: The Making of a Colonial Stereotype — The Criminal Tribes and Castes of North India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27, no. 2 (1990): 131-64.
6. Nigam, Sanjay. "Disciplining and Policing the 'Criminals by Birth', Part 1: The Making of a Colonial Stereotype — The Criminal Tribes and Castes of North India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27, no. 3 (1990): 257-87.

Media and Art:

1. Ashraf, Ajaz. *Bhima Koregaon: Challenging Caste — Brahminism's Wrath Against Dreamers of Equality*. New Delhi: Paranjyot, June 2024.

2. Kerketta, Jacinta. "Matrabhasha ki Maut / Death of the Mother Tongue." Translated by Richa Nagar. *Thirteen Poems*. Richa Nagar, University of Minnesota.
3. Tamhane, Chaitanya, dir. *Court*. 2014; Zeitgeist Films, 2015.

Suggested Readings:

1. Richie, Beth E. *Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence, and America's Prison Nation*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.
2. Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
3. Rao, Anupama. *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.
4. Ambedkar, B. R. *Annihilation of Caste: The Annotated Critical Edition*. Edited by S. Anand. Introduction: Arundhati Roy. New Delhi: Navayana, 2014.
5. Stanley, Eric A., and Nat Smith, eds. *Captive Genders: Trans Embodiment and the Prison Industrial Complex*. Oakland: AK Press, 2011; 2nd ed., 2015.
6. Devi, Mahasweta. *Dust on the Road: The Activist Writings of Mahasweta Devi*. Calcutta: Seagull Books, 1997.
7. Nigam, Sanjay. "Disciplining and policing the 'criminals by birth', Part 1: The making of a colonial stereotype— The criminal tribes and castes of North India." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 27, no. 2 (1990): 131–64.
8. Cherian, Divya. "Discipline" In *Merchants of Virtue: Hindus, Muslims, and Untouchables in Eighteenth-Century South Asia*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022.
9. Machold, Rhys. "Introduction" In *Fabricating Homeland Security: Police Entanglements across India and Palestine/Israel*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2024.
10. Sonavane, Nikita. "Colonial and Casteist Ideas Still Shape Criminalisation and Policing in India." *Himal Southasian*, January 24, 2024.
11. KB. "Tiberius Syndrome: Policing of Provincial Campuses." *Economic and Political Weekly* 19, no. 4 (January 28, 1984): 158–159.
12. Ambedkar, B. R. 1948. *Essays on Untouchables and Untouchability*. In Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches, Vol. 5. Edited by Vasant Moon. Bombay: Government of Maharashtra, 2014.
13. Hall, Stuart, Chas Critcher, Tony Jefferson, John Clarke, and Brian Roberts. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan, 1978.
14. Thomas, Rintu, and Sushmit Ghosh, dirs. *Writing with Fire*. 2021; Black Ticket Films.
15. Garbus, Liz, and Wilbert Rideau, dirs. *The Farm: Angola, USA*. 1998; Seventh Art Releasing.
16. Gares, Jac, dir. *Free CeCe!*. 2016; Jac Gares Productions.
17. Dash, Julie, dir. *Daughters of the Dust*. 1991; Kino International.

Unit 5: The camp life: Spaces of exception (2 weeks - 4 classes)

Essential Readings:

1. Agamben, Giorgio. "What Is a Camp?" In *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, translated by Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, 37–45. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
2. Augé, Marc. *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity*. London: Verso Books, 2020.
3. Jeganathan, Pradeep. "Border, Checkpoint, Bodies." In *Routledge Handbook of Asian Borderlands*, 403–410. London: Routledge, 2018.

Media and Art:

1. Graham, Patrick, dir. *Ghoul*. 2018; Netflix, 2018.
2. Le Guin, Ursula. *The Dispossessed*. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
3. Margret Atwood *Handmaid's Tale Novel Excerpts*

Suggested Readings:

1. Agier, Michel. *Managing the Undesirables: Refugee Camps and Humanitarian Government*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008.
2. Gregory, Derek. *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.
3. Oppenheimer, Joshua, dir. *The Act of Killing*. 2012; Drafthouse Films.
4. Ai, Weiwei, dir. *Human Flow*. 2017; Participant Media.
5. *Handmaids Tale*- Amazon Prime Video

Unit 6: Resisting Carceral Geographies (2 weeks – 4 classes)

Essential-Readings:

1. Davis, Angela Y. *Are Prisons Obsolete?* New York: Seven Stories Press, 2003.
2. Davis, Angela Y. *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prisons, Torture, and Empire*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005.
3. De, Rohit. *A People's Constitution: The Everyday Life of Law in the Indian Republic*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2019.
4. Gilmore, Ruth Wilson. *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation*. London: Verso Books, 2022.

Media and Art:

1. DuVernay, Ava, dir. *13th*. 2025; Netflix, 2025.
2. Butler, Octavia E. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1993.

Suggested Readings:

1. Kaba, Mariame. *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2021.
2. Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
3. Brown, Adrienne Maree. *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds*. Chico, CA: AK Press, 2017.
4. Browne, Simone. *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.
5. Zuboff, Shoshana. *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2019.
6. Story, Brett, dir. *The Prison in Twelve Landscapes*. 2016; Oh Ratface Films.
7. De la Vega, Kelly Duane, and Katie Galloway, dirs. *The Return*. 2016; American Documentary/POV.

Scheme of Evaluation and Grading

Assignment 1: A response essay on one or more readings

1500 words | Due in 6th week | 30 marks

Assignment 2: Attempt one of the following options:

Option 1: A conceptual essay on a real, fictional or imaginary space, or

Option 2: A creative project (sketch/painting/short story/photo-essay/poetry/any other genre) on spaces at the edge of the imagination

1800-3000 words | Due in 12th week | 40 marks

Assignment 3: End-term exam | 30 marks

Grade definitions

Letter Grade	Percentage of Marks	Grade Value	Grade Definitions
O	80% and Above	8.0	Outstanding: Exceptional knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and extraordinary critical and analytical ability
A+	75%-79%	7.5	Excellent: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, thorough understanding of issues; ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles and critical and analytical ability
A	70%-74%	7.0	Very Good: Sound knowledge of the subject matter, excellent organizational capacity, ability to synthesize ideas, rules and principles, critically analyse existing materials and originality in thinking and presentation
A-	65%-69%	6.0	Good: Good understanding of the subject matter, ability to identify issues and provide balanced solutions to problems and good critical and analytical skills

B+	60%-64%	5.0	Fair: Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills. Average understanding of the subject matter, limited ability to identify issues and provide solutions to problems and reasonable critical and analytical skills
B	55%-59%	4.0	Acceptable: Adequate knowledge of the subject matter to go to the next level of study and reasonable critical and analytical skills
B-	50%-54%	3.0	Marginal: Limited knowledge of the subject matter and irrelevant use of materials and, poor critical and analytical skills
P1	45%-49%	2.0	Pass 1: Pass with Basic understanding of the subject matter
P2	40%-44%	1.0	Pass 2: Pass with Rudimentary understanding of the subject matter.
F	Below 40%	0	Fail: Poor comprehension of the subject matter; poor critical and analytical skills and marginal use of the relevant materials. Will require repeating the course

Session Plan

	Class Plan	Approach/pedagogy	Assignments
Week 1	Foucault and Deleuze on Carcerality- Basic Concept	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 2	Film and Fiction	Discussion in Class	
Week 3	Panopticon and Hyper Carceral Spaces	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 4	Film and Fiction	Class Discussion	
Week 5	Law's Cartography and 'Illegal Spaces'	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 6	Film and Fiction	Class Discussion	First response essay on one or more readings
Week 7	Caste and Gender through Carcerality	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 8	Contd.	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 9	Film and Fiction	Class Discussion	
Week 10	'Camp Life' and Spaces of Exception	Lectures and Close Reading	
Week 11	Film and Fiction	Class Discussion	

Week 12	Resisting Carceral Spaces	Lectures and Close Reading	Second Response Paper
Week 13	Film and Fiction	Class Discussion	
Week 14	Responses/Reflections	Workshop	
Week 15	Responses/Reflections	Workshop	End Term