

SOCIOL 190

Kids and the Carceral State

Spring 2025

Instructor: Lara Schiffrin-Sands, lara.schiffrinsands@berkeley.edu

Seminar meetings: Monday 12-2pm

Office Hours: Friday 3-5, by appointment

Course Overview

This course explores various dimensions of the carceral state with a focus on how they are experienced by children and adolescents across the United States. First, we will begin with a broad overview of what the ‘Carceral State’ is, and how it has been understood and theorized in the academic literature. Then we will introduce a ‘Sociology of Childhood’ perspective and adopt a theoretical gaze that makes childhood and the experience of children central to the analysis of social phenomena.

In the bulk of the course, we will put the Sociology of Childhood perspective to work and disentangle some of the manifestations of the carceral state in the lives of children. We start by examining the incursion of carceral logics into three spaces where children spend their time: their schools, their homes, and their neighborhoods. We will discuss the causes, manifestations, and effects of carceral logics in these spaces, with a focus on children’s experience. Following this, we dive more closely into the experiences of children directly affected by the criminal legal system as juvenile offenders. To do so we focus on juvenile court and its consequences, be they detention or other court-mandated services. By the end of this course, you will be more aware of how the carceral state shapes childhood across various institutions, and how children themselves shape and resist penal logics. You will also have taken seriously children as social actors, and critically engaged your assumptions about childhood.

As a capstone seminar for the sociology major, this class is organized around collectively exploring the relationship between the carceral state and childhood in the U.S. today, through weekly readings, seminar discussion, and the development of an independent research paper. Throughout the semester, you will complete assignments that will help you develop an independent research paper that explores a topic of your choosing.

Grading and Evaluation

Class Participation	20%
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<i>Reading Responses</i>	10%
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<i>In-class participation</i>	10%
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Research Paper	80%
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<i>Formative Paper</i>	30%
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<i>Summative Paper</i>	50%
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Class Participation

Your participation grade will be based on a combination of active participation in class (including attendance,) and preparing and posting a reading response before each class. Students are expected to attend class regularly, complete assigned readings before class begins, arrive to class on time, and actively partake in class discussion and activities. The

quality of your participation – the extent to which it reflects thoughtful engagement with the material and with your classmates – will weigh more heavily than the *quantity* of discussion.

Reading Responses:

By 11.59pm each Sunday before class, you are expected to post a short (one paragraph) reading response about that week's readings. In the reading response, I suggest you:

- Briefly summarize the readings (what the author is asking, and what their answer is.)
- Identify something you like or dislike about the reading
- Close with a question you want to discuss in class.

Reading responses will be graded on completion.

Research Paper

Over the semester, you will develop a 5000-word paper on a topic related to the course. This research paper is the centerpiece of the course and is intended to be both challenging and rewarding. It is a chance for you to investigate and write about a topic that you care about, and to draw on the things you've learned in this course and throughout your experience as a sociology major. You may choose to write your final paper in one of four formats:

- A research paper based on original data that you have gathered, or an original analysis of a dataset, that presents new empirical findings.
- A research proposal, which uses existing research to motivate a specific new research question, describes a study design by which you could answer the question, and discuss potential findings.
- A research paper based entirely on secondary empirical evidence, which uses existing research to build a new theoretical argument.
- A bibliographic research paper, in which you make an original argument based on a synthetic review of prior research.

Other formats are allowable subject to instructor approval.

We will work on your papers throughout the semester. There will be two graded evaluations of your paper.

- 1) Formative Paper 30% of final grade 2500 words Due April 7th 11.59pm

This is your first chance to submit a draft of your research paper. From the beginning of the semester, we will do various activities in class that will help you to begin to consider ideas for your paper. You must also turn in a hard copy.

- 2) Summative Paper 50% of final grade 5000 words Due May 9th 11.59pm

This is the final draft of your research paper. It should draw on the work you did in earlier assignments and incorporate the feedback that you received from the Formative Paper. You must also turn in a hard copy.

Expectations and Class Policies

Attendance Policy

Attendance to section is mandatory. Students are allowed one unexcused absence, no questions asked. All excused absences require documentation verifying the specific circumstances. Unexcused absences beyond the allowance will affect participation grades.

Late Work

Late work may be accepted on a case-by-case basis. If you know you will be unable to meet a deadline due to circumstances beyond your control, please contact me to request an extension as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity

Do not plagiarize under any circumstances. Plagiarism is the use of intellectual material produced by another person without proper citations. This includes the use of AI tools to produce work without disclosure. If I suspect the undisclosed use of AI in your writing assignments, you may be asked to complete an oral examination, on the subject of your research paper, in lieu of submitting the research paper.

If you are unclear what constitutes plagiarism, you should consult with me or review the section on Academic Integrity by the Office for Student Life.

Accommodations

Students who have been issued a letter of accommodation from the Disabled Students Program (DSP) should contact me to ensure the necessary arrangements have been made. All students should feel free to contact me with other accessibility and/or inclusivity concerns.

Communications

The best way to talk to me about substantive questions is in person, either in class or in office hours. Please feel free to email me about bureaucratic measures, urgent issues, or to set up a time to talk. Please be aware that I do not check email after 6pm, nor on the weekends. If I do not respond for a few days, badger me!

Course Schedule

Part I: Background and Context

1. January 27th: Introductions

Review syllabus, in-class introductions.

2. February 3rd: Theories of the Carceral State

What is the carceral state and where did it come from? How are penal logics infused across society today?

Garland, David. 2001. *The Culture of Control: Crime and Social Order in Contemporary Society*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
Introduction.

Wacquant, Loïc. 2010. 'Crafting the Neoliberal State: Workfare, Prisonfare, and Social Insecurity'. *Sociological Forum* 25(2):197–220.

Feeley, Michael, and Jonathan Simon. 1992. 'New Penology: Notes on the Emerging Strategy of Corrections and Its Implications'. *Criminology* 30(4).

3. February 10th: Sociology of Childhood

What is the social construction of childhood? How can we adopt the New Sociology of Childhood approach? What does it mean to take seriously children as social actors?

Ariès, Philippe. 1962. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*. New York: Vintage Books, Chapter 3

Prout, Alan, and Allison James. 1997. 'A New Paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood?' *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*. Milton Park: Taylor and Francis.

Kitzinger, Jenny. 1997. 'Who Are You Kidding? Children, Power and the Struggle Against Sexual Abuse'. in *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: contemporary issues in the sociological study of childhood*, edited by A. James and A. Prout. London: Falmer.

Part II: The Carceral State at School, Home, and in the Street

4. February 24th: Schools

How has student behaviour become criminalised at schools? Through what process? What are the consequences of this?

Hirschfield, Paul J. 2008. 'Preparing for Prison?: The Criminalization of School Discipline in the USA'. *Theoretical Criminology* 12(1):79–101.

Kupchik, Aaron. 2010. *Homeroom Security: School Discipline in an Age of Fear*. New York: New York University Press, Chapter 3

Nolan, Kathleen. 2011. *Police in the Hallways: Discipline in an Urban High School*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, Chapter 3

5. March 3rd: Incarceration of Family and Kin

What are the consequences of parental incarceration on children and family networks?

Wakefield, Sara, and Christopher James Wildeman. 2016. *Children of the Prison Boom: Mass Incarceration and the Future of American Inequality*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Chapter 3

Geller, Amanda, Irwin Garfinkel, Carey E. Cooper, and Ronald B. Mincy. 2009. 'Parental Incarceration and Child Well-Being: Implications for Urban Families *'. *Social Science Quarterly* 90(5):1186–1202.

Foster, Holly, and John Hagan. 2015. 'Punishment Regimes and the Multilevel Effects of Parental Incarceration: Intergenerational, Intersectional, and Interinstitutional Models of Social Inequality and Systemic Exclusion'. *Annual Review of Sociology* 41(1):135–58.

6. March 10th: Punitive Child Welfare System

How do carceral logics manifest in child welfare system? How do families navigate theses?

Edwards, Frank. 2016. 'Saving Children, Controlling Families: Punishment, Redistribution, and Child Protection'. *American Sociological Review* 81(3):575–95.

Reich, Jennifer A. 2005. *Fixing Families: Parents, Power, and the Child Welfare System*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 4

7. March 17th: Hyper-policing in the Neighbourhood

How do children experience, navigate, and resist, the hyper-policing in their communities? What about the relationship with the police in communities not subject to hyper-policing?

Stoudt, Brett G., Michelle Fine, and Madeline Fox. 2011. 'Growing Up Policed in the Age of Aggressive Policing Policies'. *NYLS Law Review* 56(4):1332.

Rios, Victor M. 2011. *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*. New York: New York University Press, Chapter 3 + 5

Shedd, Carla. 2015. *Unequal City: Race, Schools, and Perceptions of Injustice*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, Chapter 5 + 6

--- SPRING BREAK ---

8. March 31st: PAPER PAUSE

Workshopping papers with peers in class.

Part III: Direct Dealings with the Juvenile Legal System

9. April 7th: Juvenile Court

What are the origins of the juvenile court system in the U.S? What are some of the logics that govern how juveniles are processed at court?

Ward, Geoff K. 2012. *The Black Child-Savers: Racial Democracy and Juvenile Justice*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, Introduction

Kupchik, Aaron. 2006. *Judging Juveniles: Prosecuting Adolescents in Adult and Juvenile Courts*. New York: New York University Press, Chapter 4

Paik, Leslie. 2011. *Discretionary Justice: Looking Inside a Juvenile Drug Court*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, Chapters 4 and 5

Harris, Alexes. 2009. 'The Role of Power in Shaming Interactions: How Social Control Is Performed in a Juvenile Court'. *Contemporary Justice Review* 12(4):379–99.

FORMATIVE PAPERS DUE: 11.59PM on bcourses AND COPY IN INSTRUCTOR'S BOX.

10. April 14th: Juvenile Detention

What happens when a juvenile is detained? What are the logics of these institutions?

Aarons, John, Lisa Smith, and Linda Wagner. 2009. *Dispatches from Juvenile Hall: Fixing a Failing System*. New York: Penguin Books. Selections.

Flores, Jerry. 2013. "'Staff Here Let You Get Down': The Cultivation and Co-optation of Violence in a California Juvenile Detention Center." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 39(1):221-241

The Kids of Rutherford County, podcast.

11. April 21st: Therapy

What alternative services, other than detention, can be mandated at court? What does the medicalization of delinquency refer to, and under what circumstances does it occur?

Conrad, Peter. 1975. 'The Discovery of Hyperkinesis: Notes on the Medicalization of Deviant Behavior'. *Social Problems* 23(1):12–21.

Ramey, David M. 2018. 'The Social Construction of Child Social Control via Criminalization and Medicalization: Why Race Matters'. *Sociological Forum* 33(1):139–64.

Dannerbeck Janku, Anne and Jiahui Yan. 2009. 'Exploring Patterns of Court-Ordered Mental Health Services for Juvenile Offenders: Is There Evidence of Systemic Bias?' *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 36(4):402–19. doi:

12. April 28th: PAPER PAUSE

Workshopping papers with peers in class.

SUMMATIVE PAPERS DUE MAY 9th 11.59PM on bcourses and IN INSTRUCTOR's BOX.