Self or Portrait of a Condition
Course Description: Soc 118L is an upper-division seminar on art/literature and society. Students are expected to engage with the course materials analytically and rigorously, to read every week, to participate in class discussion, and to complete all assignments on-time. This course investigates the relationship between art/literature and society. It focuses on what art/literature teaches us about the social world and how it does so. Many visual artists and fiction writers explore similar social problems and themes as sociologists, but their use of creative mediums and methods produce different and sometimes more effective “ways of seeing.” This quarter we will focus specifically on creative approaches to understanding imprisonment.

March 30  The Prison: Representational Challenges

*What I wanted was to unequivocally lay out the real feel of hard time.* C.D. Wright


Bernard Patrick, Self Portrait of a Condition (2000). In-class viewing.


April 6  The Prison Industrial Complex

*Prisons are a key indicator, a crucial leverage point with which to expose the true nature of our culture and political economy.* Elihu Rosenblatt


*Christian Parenti, Lockdown America: Police and Prisons in the Age of Crisis, Ch 1 (pp. 3-13), Ch 2. Verso, 2008.


**April 13**

**Prison Landscapes**

We need to think about prisons as part of the landscape of everyday life. Laura Pulido


*Craig Gilmore, “California’s Hinterlands” in Trevor Paglen, Recording Carceral Landscapes.


“Prison Sentences: The Prison as Site/The Prison as Subject.” Exhibition organized at Eastern State Penitentiary by Julie Courtney and Todd Gilens. In-class presentation.

**April 20**

**Social and Civil Death**

Prisoners are citizens. Whether or not they feel recognized and valued as such, they are members of a family and of a community. Their lives, as mangled and distorted as some of them are, still count. Gregory Frederick


April 27  
Art and Critical Resistance I
This is what brings you to this page now. I was asked to go to New Orleans and witness things with a camera. These are parts of what I remember or bits I have in images or soundtrack—people telling stories, what others saw, stories of speech permitted and speech proscribed and speech fallen among debris in the streets, speech that carries force and speech that has none. These are glimpses of things that shape, misshape, permit, forbid, and yet demand speech as if one's life depended upon it. Ashley Hunt

Special Guest: Ashley Hunt
http://www.ashleyhuntwork.net/.


May 4  
Art and Critical Resistance II
I asked Herman Wallace a very simple question: “What kind of a house does a man who has lived in a six-foot-by-nine-foot cell for over 30 years dream of?” Jackie Sumell


May 11  
The Artist in Prison
At first glance, the term “Prison Art” seems contradictory. Roger Cardinal


James Drake, “Tongue Cut Sparrows” and “A Thousand Tongues Burn and Sing.” In-class viewing.


May 18  
Public Secrets: Women inside and outside prison
I'm here at the crossroads standing in need of direction, a signpost, a tiny clue, a piece torn from a map….Can you see me, who can see me? Can you hear me, who can hear me? Who's willing to come bargain with the prisoner's wife? Asha Bandele


**May 25**

**Prison Abolition**

Prison needs to be abolished as the dominant mode of addressing social problems that are better solved by other institutions and other means. The call for prison abolition urges us to imagine and strive for a very different social landscape. Angela Y. Davis


*Angela Y. Davis, “Abolitionist Alternatives” in *Are Prisons Obsolete?*


**June 1**

Conclusion