DRAFT SYLLABUS
COML/HOI 103a Crime and Punishment: Justice and Criminality from Plato to Serial

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Course Description:
This seminar looks at concepts of criminality, justice, and punishment in Western humanist traditions. We will trace conversations about jurisprudence in literature, philosophy, political theory, and legal studies. Topics include democracy and the origins of justice, narrating criminality, and the aesthetic force mobilized by criminal trials. This course also involves observing local courtroom proceedings and doing research in historical archives about significant criminal prosecutions.

Course Requirements and Assignments:
Homework (5 assignments, 1 page each): 25%
Class presentation on outside research: 5%
Courtroom Ethnography, 20%
Interpretive Essay, 20%
Final research project, 30%

Learning Objectives:
• to develop close reading skills and the ability to make compelling interpretive claims, in writing and speaking, on the basis of close reading
• to develop archival research skills by using local archival material relating to a major historical trial
• to critically examine significant aspects of the history of the trial as a social and political practice in democracies
• to learn significant aspects of how trials work in contemporary U. S. courtrooms
• to be able to trace conversations among many genres of writing about complex questions involving justice, criminality, and punishment
• to be able to analyze the aesthetic and narrative dimensions of legal procedures and practices

Likely Texts, by Genre:
Drama
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, The Exonerated

Prose Fiction
Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment
Heinrich von Kleist, Michael Kohlhaas
Richard Wright, Native Son
Franz Kafka, In the Penal Colony

Poetry
Scheffler, ed., Wall Tappings: An Anthology of Writings by Women Prisoners
Bell Gale Chevigny, ed., Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing
Philosophy / Political Theory / Social Theory
Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*
Martin Luther King, Jr, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

*History and Historical Archive*
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*
Michael M. Topp (Ed.), *The Sacco and Vanzetti Case: A Brief History with Documents*
Sacco and Vanzetti Collections, Farber University Archives and Special Collections (The Francis Russell, Gardner Jackson, Mrs. Walter Frank, and Tom O’Connor collections)

*Graphic Novel*
Derf, *My Friend Dahmer*

*Podcast*
Sarah Koenig, *Serial*

**Reading Schedule:**

**Unit 1, Weeks 1-2: Democracy and Socratic Problems of Justice**
Plato, *Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo*
Martin Luther King, Jr, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”

**Unit 2, Weeks 3-6: Narrating Criminality**
Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*
Heinrich von Kleist, *Michael Kohlhaas*
Richard Wright, *Native Son*
Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, (selections)
Derf, *My Friend Dahmer*
Sarah Koenig, *Serial*, episodes 1-4

**Unit 3, Weeks 7-8: Trials in Boston: Sacco and Vanzetti and Today**
Sacco and Vanzetti Collections
Michael M. Topp (Ed.), *The Sacco and Vanzetti Case: A Brief History with Documents*
Trip to Boston Municipal Court

**Unit 3, Weeks 9-11: Rendering Verdicts**
Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*
Jessica Blank and Erik Jensen, *The Exonerated*
Sarah Koenig, *Serial*, episodes 5-12

**Unit 4, Weeks 12-13: Imagining Punishment**
Wall Tappings and *Doing Time* (selections)
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (selections)
Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Colony*