

EDUC 440: Education for Abolition  
007 Persson Hall • Tuesday/Thursday 8:30-9:45am

Instructor: Laura Jaffee  
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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2:45-3:45pm, Thursdays 12-2pm  
Schedule here: <https://calendly.com/ljajfee>

"There's no such thing as neutral education. Education either functions as an instrument to bring about conformity or freedom." - Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course examines how the institutions of policing and incarceration (in all its forms) reinforce systems of domination (e.g., racial capitalism, settler-colonialism, heteropatriarchy, Islamophobia, and ableism). As the place where we're all studying/working, we'll primarily focus on the U.S. However, the course will also draw on internationalist analyses that highlight how practices of surveillance, policing, and confinement boomerang between settler-colonial and imperial nation-states (and how practices of collective resistance against these institutions, too, traverse borders). Throughout the course, we'll look at the role of education in reinforcing, normalizing, and expanding prisons and policing.

Beyond studying the role of policing and prisons historically and today, we'll draw on the work and analyses of abolitionist organizers collectively imagining and creating alternatives to these institutions. That is, we'll consider not only why abolitionists argue that prisons and policing should be abolished, but what we might build in their wake. While schools have often served as sites for bolstering policing and carceral logics, we'll also explore education—both within and beyond the walls of the formal education system—as an essential tool for resisting systems of power upheld by prisons and police, with particular emphasis on the role of political education in abolitionist movements. The first few weeks of the course will introduce abolitionist concepts, language, and analyses so we can develop a shared foundation and vocabulary. From there, the class is loosely organized by 4 themes: 1.) Police, 2.) Prisons, 3.) Place/Property, and 4.) Protest. As you might imagine, there's a good deal of overlap/intersection, but this is our general roadmap.

While there's space for burgeoning political analyses, ambiguity, and uncertainty, this class is not primarily concerned with debating the value of abolition, but rather exploring/discussing why it's necessary and how we might get there. This course is a space for people who want to live in—and work to create—a different world to collectively study, discuss, and imagine how we might do so.

## REQUIRED BOOKS

Kaba, M. (2021). *We Do This 'Til We Free Us: Abolitionist Organizing and Transforming Justice*. Chicago: Haymarket Books.

Le Guin, U. (1999/1974). *The Dispossessed*. HarperCollins.

Purnell, D. (2021). *Becoming Abolitionists: Police, Protests, and the Pursuit of Freedom*. New York: Astra House.

## ASSIGNMENTS:

### Participation (20%)

Learning and knowledge production are collective processes. Showing up having read and being prepared to **thoughtfully contribute and ask questions** is essential for both your and your peers' (and my) learning in this class. Readings should be completed by the date listed on the syllabus *before* class.

### Reading Summary (5%)

As part of a commitment to collectively cultivating an accessible learning space, each student is responsible for creating reading notes to share 1 time during the semester. Your notes are a resource that the whole class can consult. Likewise, you'll be able to consult all your classmates' notes (e.g., if you miss class for whatever reason, if you didn't fully grasp the author's argument, or if you had a particularly rough week and simply weren't able to do the closest of readings). Your notes should include a *brief* (5-7 sentences) summary of the reading. Beyond that, you can choose how to organize your notes. You might want to include a few bullet points of compelling examples that the author uses to support their argument, a quote that clearly articulates the thesis, etc. Your reading summary is not meant to be long (around  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 1 page). Think about what's most useful for you as a quick recap to refresh your memory about a text. **Your summary should be added to a shared Reading Summary Google Doc (linked at the top of Moodle) by 5pm Monday or Wednesday the day before your assigned reading** (so all the reading summaries are accessible in one place). Some questions to consider while reading and taking notes (these are meant as a guide; your reading notes need not directly answer all 4 questions):

1. What are the author's main arguments?
2. What struck you as interesting or unsettling about those arguments? Why?
3. How do claims made in this text relate or compare to those brought up in other course texts, or to your own experiences?
4. What questions did the reading raise for you?

### Reflective Letter (20%)

For this assignment, you'll write a **5ish page (double spaced) letter reflecting on the role of policing/surveillance/securitization in society**. The letter should be written in first-person with an accessible/narrative tone. You might think about writing through how your understanding of the role of police has shifted throughout your life: What events shaped your shifting understanding of the role of police, and why/how? You'll decide to whom the letter is addressed. Think strategically about who you're writing to: Why are you choosing to write to this person? Does it feel possible to sway them? You might also think to approach this as a public letter. So, perhaps you're writing to a politician or religious leader whom you have no expectation of swaying, but the point is not to sway the addressee— it's to sway other readers. Alternatively, you might write your letter to your future self. What's on your heart now that you want to remind your future self, or ensure you remember/embody down the road? Your letter should cite at least 3 course readings. The citation format is up to you. If citations feel clunky within the body of your letter, you might think to use footnotes so as not to disrupt your letter-writing prose. **You'll need to bring a draft to class on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> for a peer-editing session.** Your draft can be rough/incomplete, but bear in mind that the more you've written, the more constructive feedback you'll be able to get from your peers.

### Documentary Discussion (15%)

Working in small groups, you'll watch a documentary from a provided list. While you watch, I want you to think about (and take notes on) what the documentary reveals about the role of prisons/policing in society. In a recorded discussion (which you'll be submitting), your group will talk through the questions: What does the film suggest about the role of policing/incarceration under U.S. racial capitalism? What does the film suggest about the role education plays in collective organizing against the harms of policing and prisons? Secondly, consider how the film is shot: What part of the story gets told? What's left out? What are the implications of how the story is told, whose voices are included, and whose are not? More details to come.

### Book Club Leader (15%)

Once during the semester (on a day labeled "Book Club" in blue on the schedule), you'll be working with a small group (3-4 people) to generate questions and facilitate discussion *for the whole class period*. This is not a presentation. For the week you're facilitating, you'll meet with your group to brainstorm questions and plan a lesson based on that day's assigned chapters (from Ursula Le Guin's, *The Dispossessed*). The goal of the assignment is to make sense of this novel using concepts and critical frameworks from the course, and to expand our collective imagination about other possible worlds through science fiction. Your facilitation should make at least 2 direct connections to course texts. You're encouraged to include a brief activity, video/audio/media supplement, or other interactive element (short video clip, visual aid, etc.). Consider what teaching practices you can use to make your lesson accessible and engaging. Resources with sample activities and accessibility considerations will be posted to Moodle for your reference. Your group will submit a brief outline/lesson plan to me to give me a sense of your plan and the work/preparation you put into it.

### Final Project (20%)

Your final project is collaborative (completed in groups of 3-4). There will be a wide range of options for both the content and form of your project, but whatever your group decides to create **MUST** be public-facing, meaning there's some means of engaging a broader audience (i.e., beyond our class). As just a couple of examples, you could create a digital or physical zine to distribute around campus, or a social media account with posts of graphics and videos you create as a political education tool. Sometime before November break, you'll all decide as a class if you'd like to: 1.) complete an independent project with your group, OR 2.) if you'd like to work as a whole class, with each group of 3-4 completing one portion of a whole class project.

### Course Self-Assessment (5%)

Details to come.

## SUMMARY OF DUE DATES:

| <i>Assignment</i>      | <i>Value</i> | <i>Due</i>                     |
|------------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Participation          | 20%          | Ongoing                        |
| Reading Summary        | 5%           | Varies                         |
| Reflective Letter      | 20%          | Friday, 9/30 by 5pm            |
| Documentary Discussion | 15%          | Friday, 10/21 by 5pm           |
| Book Club Leader       | 15%          | Varies (Thursdays Weeks 10-13) |
| Final Group Project    | 20%          | Finals Week                    |
| Self-Assessment        | 5%           | Thursday, 12/8                 |

## CLASS POLICIES & RESOURCES

### *Attendance*

In the event of an unavoidable absence, please contact me by email ([ljaffee@colgate.edu](mailto:ljaffee@colgate.edu)) prior to class. Please keep in mind that more than 2 unexcused absences will affect your participation grade. After two unexcused absences, you will lose two percentage points per unexcused absence. Please note that sickness is an *excused* absence— out of respect for your and your classmates' wellbeing, do NOT come to class sick. Stay home, rest, Netflix, etc. and check resources posted to Moodle when you're feeling better. Please be in communication with me if circumstances in your life are inhibiting your ability to consistently participate in or attend class so that we can figure out together how best to support your learning.

### *Accessibility*

My goal is to support the full participation of all students and create a learning environment that is inclusive, accessible, and welcoming. I understand that students have different ways and paces of learning and accessing information, and that each student comes with their own, and sometimes difficult, experiences with learning. I aim to make the classroom environment comfortable and respectful without undermining the importance of discussing conflicting ideas and opinions. If there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that impede your inclusion and participation, please communicate with me as soon as possible so we can discuss the best way to support your learning. If you have any kind of disability, whether visible or non-visible, learning, emotional, physical, or cognitive, and need accommodations or alternatives to lectures or assignments, please contact me so we can discuss accommodations and support. *In an effort to be fragrance-free, please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne, or other heavily-scented products that make spaces inaccessible to folks with asthma, allergies, and other chemical sensitivities.*

In some cases, I will ask students requesting accommodations to contact the Director of Academic Support and Disability Services to receive help determining and coordinating a specific accommodation. Contact info as follows: Evelyn Lester, Director of Disability Services

Tel: (315) 228-7375; TTY: (315) 228-6001; Email: [elester@colgate.edu](mailto:elester@colgate.edu); [Website link](#)

### *SensusAccess*

SensusAccess is available to students, faculty, and staff with 3 different access points. Documents can be submitted to SensusAccess from within Moodle as well as from the [SensusAccess page on the Colgate website](#). Students can also submit documents for conversion directly on the [SensusAccess website](#). The converted document will be emailed to you regardless of where they upload/submit the original document.

### *Email Policy*

Your questions are welcome. Please give me 48 hours to respond on weekdays before following up. I do not respond to emails on Sundays. Include "EDUC 440" in the email subject line so that I know the message is course-related and can respond promptly. **Emails with questions about upcoming assignments should be sent at least 48 hours before the assignment is due.** I cannot guarantee a response to emails about assignments within 48 hours of the submission deadline. **If you're unable to make it to my office hours but would like to meet, please email me (24 hours in advance of your proposed meeting time) suggesting another window of time to meet.**

### *Library Support*

Librarians are available to assist you with your research needs. You can [make an appointment](#) to meet with a librarian, or stop by the main desk and you will be directed to the librarian on call. [Online research guides](#) are also available to help you identify the library databases most relevant to your topic.

### *The Writing and Speaking Center*

“Regardless of ability, all of us can benefit from receiving constructive feedback on our writing or public speaking. At the Writing and Speaking Center, a free service for all students, writing consultants can help you with a draft's focus, organization, grammar, style, and citations, among other aspects. If you're preparing a speech or oral presentation, speaking consultants can help you organize your content or practice your delivery to an audience. All meetings are private, and you may visit at any stage of your process, from clarifying your initial ideas to reviewing a final draft or practicing a presentation. See the webpage (<http://www.colgate.edu/centers-and-institutes/writing-and-speaking-center>) for more information or to reserve an appointment. The center is located in 208 Lathrop Hall. Phone: (315) 228-6085”

### *Counseling Center*

“The Counseling Center, located in Conant house, focuses on helping students to ameliorate problems that might be obstacles to their growth and development by providing the highest quality clinical services as well as consultation, prevention, training, and psycho-education. The Counseling Center supports the mission of Colgate University and the Office of the Dean of the College, encouraging the intellectual, emotional, and social development of students, working to cultivate a genuine sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. We are committed to supporting diversity and treating all members of the Colgate community with respect, recognizing a special duty to those of under-represented and historically marginalized groups.”

<http://www.colgate.edu/offices-and-services/counseling>

### *Academic Integrity and the Colgate University Honor Code*

Please bear in mind your obligations as a Colgate student. Academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to plagiarism, will not be tolerated. You are expected to cite work accurately and diligently. If you have any questions about what this means or how it is done correctly, feel free to contact me. It is expected that the work you submit in this class will be your own. You are expected to carefully read [Colgate's Honor Code](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) and will be held accountable for compliance to the policy. Any incident brought to my attention will follow the guidelines set forth in The Colgate University Academic Honor Code and Colgate University Student Handbook.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **Week 1**                      **Syllabus, Course Overview, and Introductions**

Thursday, 8/25                      Half-Day Schedule

Friday, 8/26                      Tuesday Schedule

### **Week 2**                      **Introducing Abolition**

Tuesday, 8/30                      LISTEN: Hayes (2022): Hope Is Not a Given. We Must Cultivate It Together. [52 min.]

Abolition and Disability Justice Collective. Crippling Abolition.

Thursday, 9/1                      Burden-Stelly (2020). Modern U.S. Racial Capitalism

Purnell (2021). Intro: How I Became an Abolitionist [11 pages]

### **Week 3**                      **Introducing Abolition**

Tuesday, 9/6                      Purnell (2021). Chapter 1: What Justice? [33 pages]

LISTEN: Hayes (2022). Abolition Means Reclaiming the Commons and Rejecting Securitization. [30 min.]

Thursday, 9/8                      Kaba (2021). Part 1: So You're Thinking about Becoming an Abolitionist (pp. 2-28). [BOOK]

LISTEN: Schools, Prisons, and Abolitionist Futures [30 min.]

### **Week 4**                      **PART 1: Police**

Tuesday, 9/13                      Purnell (2021). Chapter 3: Resistance and Reform. [30 pages]

Maynard, R. & Simpson, L. B. (2022). *Rehearsals for Living*. Part 5 [30 pages]

Thursday, 9/15                      LISTEN: Millennials are Killing Capitalism Podcast (2022). Dorothy Roberts on Family Policing and Abolition [1 hr. 45 min.]

Cops Are Cowards, But We Don't Want Them Brave (2022)

Taylor (2022). Abortion Is About Freedom, Not Just Privacy

### **Week 5**                      **PART 1: Police**

Tuesday, 9/20 Goodwin (2020). Intro & Chapter 2: Pregnancy and State Power: Prosecuting Fetal Endangerment (pp. 1-27). *Policing the Womb*.

LISTEN: Hayes (2022). You Cannot Divorce Murder from Policing [1 hr.]

Thursday, 9/22 Goodwin (2020). Chapter 5: Changing Roles of Doctors and Nurses: Hospital Snitches and Police Informants (pp. 78-97). *Policing the Womb*.

Abolition & Disability Justice Collective (2020). Alternatives to Policing Based in Disability Justice [15 pages]

*IN CLASS: Letter Peer-Editing Session (come to class with a draft of your letter)*

## Week 6 **PART 1: Police**

Tuesday, 9/27 NO CLASS (ROSH HASHANAH)

Thursday, 9/29 Davis, Dent, Meiners, and Richie (2022). Now. *Abolition. Feminism. Now.* [42 pages]

Jones & Hagopian. (2021). *Black Lives Matter at School: An Uprising for Educational Justice*. [excerpts]

Kelly (2020). Police Unions: What to Know and Why They Don't Belong in the Labor Movement. *Teen Vogue*.

**\*\*REQUIRED Lecture by Doug George-Kanentiio, "How Native Boarding Schools Sparked the Indigenous Rights Movements. We, Who Were Not Crushed, Became Hell Raisers." Lawrence 105 at 4:15-6:00pm**

**\*\*Letter due Friday, 9/30 by 5pm**

## Week 7 **PART 2: Prisons**

Tuesday, 10/4 Kaba (2021). "A People's History of Prisons in the U.S." & "Arresting the Carceral State" (pp. 72-81). [BOOK]

LISTEN: Hayes (2021). Getting Real About Prisons and Why They Don't Make Us Safer [1 hr.]

Thursday, 10/6 Recommitting to the Joyful Classroom

*IN CLASS: Watch The Black Power Mixtape*

## Week 8 **PART 2: Prisons**

Tuesday, 10/11 FALL BREAK



Thursday, 10/13 Kaba (2021). Part 2: There Are No Perfect Victims (pp. 30-52). [BOOK]  
 LISTEN: The Queer History of The Women's House of Detention [45 min.]

**Week 9 PART 2: Prisons**

Tuesday, 10/18 Stewart & Russell (2001). Disablement, Prison, and Historical Segregation.  
 Sojoyner (2016). Intro: The Problematic History Between Schools and Prisons [12 pages]  
 IN CLASS: Watch "Deaf in Prison" [25 min.]

Thursday, 10/20 Sojoyner (2016) Chapter 2: In the Belly of the Beast [36 pages]

**\*\*Documentary Discussion Due Friday, 10/21 by 5pm**

**Week 10 PART 2: Prisons**

Tuesday, 10/25 LISTEN: Hayes (2022). Incarcerated Organizers Are Resisting Amid Deteriorating Conditions. [35 min.]  
 WATCH: The Struggle for Abolition: From the U.S. To Palestine [1.5 hrs.]  
 Samidoun (2022). Palestinian Prisoners' Day message from occupation prisons to the global movement for liberation and solidarity

Thursday, 10/27 *BOOK CLUB: The Dispossessed Chapters 1-3 [70 pages]*

**Week 11 PART 3: Place/Property**

Tuesday, 11/1 *GUEST LECTURE with Syracuse-based community organizer and Black feminist birth worker SeQuoia Kemp*  
 NPR. Through community-based care, doula SeQuoia Kemp advocates for radical change  
 LISTEN: Hayes (2022). Indigenous Abolitionists Are Organizing for Healing and Survival. [50 min.]

Thursday, 11/3 *BOOK CLUB: The Dispossessed Chapters 4-6 [80 pages]*

**Week 12 PART 3: Place/Property**

Tuesday, 11/8 *Meet in Picker Art Gallery*

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
|                 | Purnell (2021). Chapter 4: Love and Abolition [30 pages]   |
| Thursday, 11/10 | <i>BOOK CLUB: The Dispossessed Chapters 7-9 [90 pages]</i>   |
| <b>Week 13</b>  | <b>PART 3: Place/Property</b>  |
| Tuesday, 11/15  | Walia & Dilts (2016). <u>Dismantle &amp; Transform: On Abolition, Decolonization, &amp; Insurgent Politics</u> [9 pages] |
|                 | Reddy (2016). <u>We Don't Need No Education: Deschooling as an Abolitionist Practice</u> [9 pages]                       |
|                 | Kanafani. <u>The Right of Return is Landback</u> [10 pages]  |
| Thursday, 11/17 | <i>BOOK CLUB: The Dispossessed Chapters 10-13 [70 pages]</i>   |
| <b>Week 14</b>  | <b>NOVEMBER BREAK</b>  |
| <b>Week 15</b>  | <b>PART 4: Protest</b>   |
| Tuesday, 11/29  | Kaba (2021). Part 5: We Must Practice and Experiment: Abolitionist Organizing and Theory (pp. 104-129). [BOOK]           |
|                 | WATCH: <u>TJ Responses to Campus Sexual Violence</u> [1.5 hrs]   |
| Thursday, 12/1  | LISTEN: Hayes (2022). <u>Ruth Wilson Gilmore on Abolition, the Climate Crisis and What Must Be Done</u> [1 hr. 20 min.]  |
|                 | <i>IN CLASS: Time to Workshop Final Project</i>  |
| <b>Week 16</b>  | <b>PART 4: Protest</b>   |
| Tuesday, 12/6   | Sojoyner (2016). Chapter 5: By All Means Possible: The Historical Struggle over Black Education [40 pages]               |
| Thursday, 12/8  | <i>Final Project Sharing and Self-Assessment/Reflection</i>  |
| <b>Week 17</b>  | <b>FINALS WEEK</b>   |
| Friday, 12/16   | 9-11am Exam Slot   |
|                 | <b>**Final Project Due</b>   |