HIS 287
Crime and Criminal Justice in the U.S.

Satisfies: SBS, USA [DEC: F & 4]

Instructor: Willie Mack
Online Asynchronous

From seventeenth-century Colonial America to the George Floyd anti-police protests of 2020-21, this course will look at the evolution of the criminal justice system in United States’ history. This course will ask how have criminal justice institutions – specifically policing and incarceration - evolved since the seventeenth century, and why? It will do this by interrogating the ways in which historians and other social scientists have examined the criminal justice system, paying particular attention to how this institution has reflected specific eras of U.S. history. Moving chronologically, this course will look at criminal justice in Colonial America, the Antebellum South, Reconstruction and the post Reconstruction eras, the Progressive era, World War I, the 1920s-1950s, and into the modern era of militarized policing and mass incarceration. Lastly, it will pay particular attention to how policing and incarceration have interacted with and reacted to the post 1950s civil rights movements, post-1965 immigration, and the emergence of the New Right and neoliberalism in the 1980s. This course will also incorporate a transnational aspect to assess the ways the U.S. has implemented policing and incarceration to build and sustain U.S. empire. Finally, this course will examine the legacy of the criminal justice system in the U.S. and ask students to think critically about the ways it functions in our society and impact the ways in which live. Students will be assigned weekly essays and articles to read. They will demonstrate their understanding of the material by completing weekly short writing assignments. At the end of the course, they will submit a final essay.