Going to Prison in America

Course Description:
America imprisons a huge number of people – roughly 2.3 million. The jails that hold these individuals are in our communities (including Northampton and Greenfield, Mass.), but the incarcerated people and their family are generally invisible, to the point that many community members have no idea they live, shop and go to work right next to compounds that imprison hundreds –sometimes thousands – of their former neighbors, co-workers and fellow students. How do people get to prison? Who goes to prison? What is life in jail like? What happens when they get out? How can the mass incarceration system be reformed? This course will combine readings (and guest-speaker sessions) from people who are, or have been, incarcerated, with expert proposals for the reform of the many facets of the American criminal justice system. The students will have a chance to both familiarize themselves with the ins and outs of the mass incarceration phenomenon and to engage critically with its history and its legal, sociological, cultural and philosophical underpinnings. A field trip to the Hampshire County Jail in Northampton is planned for later in the semester.

Season Course Is Offered: Fall
Meeting Day: Wednesday
Instructor First Name and Middle Initial: Razvan
Instructor Last Name: Sibii
Instructor Email: razvan@comm.umass.edu
Course Time: 12:20pm - 1:10pm

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