

Parenting from Prison: Mothers on the Inside

Spring 05

SOCIAL ISSUES in PSYCHOLOGY Psychology 312¹ and Women's Studies 115

An Experiential and Service Learning course in Psychology and Women's Studies for Temple University students and Women at Riverside Correctional Facility

January 18-May 2 Wednesday afternoons (class time is 1:30-3:30 for the RCF students and 12:40-4:00 pm for TU students)²

Instructor

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COURSE GOALS

We will explore how women form families, mother their children, mother other people's children, and stay connected to families inside and outside prison. Not every student in the class is a mother, but everyone has had an experience of being mothered. We will, therefore, examine the experiences of mothers and their children from both sides of the relationship. We will consider the experiences of multiple mothers—birth mothers, foster mothers, adoptive mothers, and what Patricia Hill Collins calls "other mothers." By the end of the course I hope our eyes will be opened wider than before through discussing and experiencing these issues with classmates who reside inside and outside prison walls. One goal, therefore is to acquire new understandings about mothering, family connections, and imprisonment. Another goal is to create methods and materials to help mothers and children communicate and maintain connections. Implementing this goal will of course depend on what is permissible as well as what we can envision and create. Even if we cannot implement them immediately the ideas and creations will still be valuable and they may still find a use in the future.

COURSE FORMAT AND PROCEDURES⁵

¹ *Prerequisite for psychology students: Psych. C060 and Psych. 0210*

² For RCF women the class is 1:30-3:30. For TU women the time is 12:40-4:00 to allow for transportation and clearance into and out of Riverside Correctional Facility, 8151 State Road, Phila.

³ The instructor will adhere to Temple University's policy on provisions for students with disabilities

⁴ Office hours Spring 05 T,TH 11:30-1:00 and by appointment

⁵ The grading policy will be explained in class for RCF and TU students. What counts in this course is attendance, class participation, and your written work. Each of these is graded as a percentage.

This course includes multiple forms of learning ranging from reading and writing about the assigned texts to writing biographies and autobiographies, designing activities for children and parents, role playing family relationships, writing letters and writing stories to share with children. Class members will also design a creative project, the nature of which is yet to be determined.

To have a productive class discussion we need everyone to come prepared, having completed the reading and writing assignments. We should all be prepared to pose interesting questions, provide thoughtful answers, and lead interesting discussions. Each week four Discussion Leaders will take particular responsibility for starting a discussion. I will not lecture but will guide a moderate the class discussions and activities.

I ask that everyone be respectful of others' ideas, especially those you disagree with most strongly. This sounds simple but may be difficult at times. We might stop occasionally to practice listening and responding with honesty and respect because the topics we are studying may provoke strong opinions and deep feelings. This is not a therapy session but we will be mindful of feelings that surface. If the class breaks up over misunderstandings or hurt feelings we may not be able to mend the break or bring the class together again. In an atmosphere of respect we all learn more.

READING ASSIGNMENTS: Each week you will read several articles or chapters and write a reaction paper . The articles will be given to you and the books are available from Miss Lee for RCF students and the Temple Bookstore for TU students.

- BOOKS:

1. Kathryn Watterson, Meda Chesne (1996) Women in Prison: Inside the Concrete Womb. Northeastern University Press
ISBN: 1555532381
2. Boudin, K. and Greco, R. eds., (1998). Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison. A self-help book for incarcerated parents, social workers and community service centers. The Children Center, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility; The Osborne Society; and The Women's Prison Association. [order from The Osborne Association 36-31 38th Street Long Island City, NY 11101 Attn: Beverly Grant (718) 707-2654]
This is a book detailing the experience of 11 mothers at the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility who came together to participate in the "Parenting from a Distance" Program. They wrote this book to help other incarcerated mothers believe in the possibility of playing a significant role in their children's lives, even from prison.

- ARTICLES:
 1. Pompa, Lori "Service-Learning as Crucible: Reflections on Immersion, Context, Power, and Transformation."
 2. Kidder, Louise H. "Alchemy in Prison"
 3. Boudin, Kathy, "Making a Different Way of Life." Published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Fellowship, May/June 2004
 4. Boudin, Kathy (1998). "Lessons from a mother's program in prison : A psycho-social approach supports women and their children," Women and Therapy. Vol. 21, No.1 (Also published as a chapter in Breaking the Rules : Women in prison an feminist therapy. Eds. Judy Harden and Marcia Hill. New York The Haworth Press.)

- Essays, Poems, Personal Writings
 1. A Trilogy of Journeys, Kathy Boudin
 2. Net of Souls, Kathy Boudin
 3. You Throw Like a Boy, Kathy Boudin

WRITING ASSIGNMENTS and CREATIVE PROJECTS

1. Reaction Papers: Each week when you have an assigned reading you should bring a 1-2 page reaction to the readings. Do not limit yourself to saying you "agree" or "disagree"—that is too simple. Examine what the author wrote and what provoked you to respond. Perhaps your reaction comes from your own experience, perhaps it comes from some beliefs that you find challenged by the author. Examine your own responses as well as the author's statements.
2. You have 11 opportunities to write Reaction Papers. You must complete 10 of those papers by the dates listed to receive 100% for this part of your grade. If you complete 9 on time your Reaction Paper grade will be 90%. If you complete 8 your grade will be 80%, and so on.
3. Creative projects: As the semester progresses you will have an opportunity to develop a creative project. Each semester the members of the class design and develop one or more projects that they want to work on together. In some semesters the projects are products that each class member can take home at the end of the term (e.g. a "yearbook" of memories from the semester, a calendar for the next year). In other semesters the class created books and wall hangings that could be used and enjoyed by women and their children in the prison. You will also have an opportunity to contribute materials or performances for the Closing Ceremony at the end of the semester. You and your classmates will decide what to do and will begin working on this around the middle of the semester.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION-LEADER ASSIGNMENTS

Four members of the class will be the Discussion Leaders for each week's reading assignments. You will sign up in groups of 4 (2 RCF students and 2 TU

students). This is a discussion class instead of a “lecture” class so I count on everyone to be ready to talk about the readings. The 4 Discussion Leaders will bring questions and comments to start a lively give-and-take.

Make a note of who your partners are, communicate with each other in the week before class (two RCF women talk with each other, two TU women do the same) to prepare. (Check in with each other to be sure your partner will be in class with you.) If you discover that you will be absent on the date for which you’ve signed, find a classmate to take your place.

At the start of each class the 4 Discussion Leaders will have 10-15 minutes to get together and plan their strategy. (During this period other members of the class will meet in small groups to discuss their reactions to the readings and to last week’s class.)

Your grade for serving as a Discussion Leader will be based on doing so when you are scheduled to serve. If you miss the class for which you volunteered to be a Discussion Leader, you will not receive credit for this assignment unless you pre-arranged to “trade” with a classmate to take your place (whose turn you can take on another date).

SCHEDULE OF CLASS MEETINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Note: ***The class is an academic class (not a practical how-to class) with the following elements and benefits:***

1. ***Reading and writing about the assigned chapters and articles***
2. ***Studying with people you may not otherwise be acquainted with who care about the same issues***
3. ***Hopefully expanding the way we view society and individuals (including ourselves)***
4. ***Encouraging us to make a difference***

WEEK 1 January 19 Meet separately

- *TU students meet at Temple, AH 821 at 12:30 and then carpool to RCF for an Orientation*
- *RCF students meet with Dr. Kidder when the orientation for Temple students ends, around 2:30*

WEEK 2 January 26 Meet together at RCF at 1:30
Read for today’s class: and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#1)

- Pompa, Lori "Service-Learning as Crucible: Reflections on Immersion, Context, Power, and Transformation."

WEEK 3 February 2: Meet separately; Sign up to be Discussion Leaders
TU Students at 12:30 in AH 821 [Sign up to be Discussion Leaders](#)

RCF Students at **2:30** in RCF Sign up to be Discussion Leaders
Read for today's class and bring a 1-page reaction pape (#2):

- Kidder, Louise H. "Alchemy in Prison"

WEEK 4 February 9 Meet together at **1:30** for the rest of the semester—
 Discussion Leaders come prepared!

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#3):

- Women in Prison: Chapter 1: A Separate Society: Inside the Concrete Womb
- Women in Prison: Chapter 2 A Personal Journey: The Genesis of this Book

WEEK 5 February 16

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#4) :

- Boudin, Kathy, "Making a Different Way of Life." Published by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in Fellowship, May/June 2004 (Xeroxed article given to RCF students and posted on Blackboard for TU students)
- Women in Prison Chapter 4: Facing Facts: Who Gets Punished? What are their Crimes?

WEEK 6 February 23

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#5) :

- Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison Forward and Introduction, pp. 1-13
- Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison Chapter 1, Who we were as mothers before coming to prison, and our feelings looking back. pp 1-24

WEEK 7 March 2

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#6) :

- Women in Prison Chapter 11: Locked Out: The Concrete Wall between Women and Their Children
- Boudin, Kathy (1998). "Lessons from a mother's program in prison : A psycho-social approach supports women and their children," Women and Therapy. Vol. 21, No.1 (Simultaneously published as a chapter in Breaking the Rules : Women in prison an feminist therapy. Eds. Judy Harden and Marcia Hill. New York The Haworth Press.)⁶

⁶ You can find this article on Kathy Boudin's website

<http://www.kathyboudin.com/bedford.htm>

It is listed under her list of Academic Writings and you can download it as a pdf file

(<http://www.kathyboudin.com/breakingrules.pdf>)

You should use a Temple University computer to do this if you don't have Adobe Acrobat on a computer you use at home or at work.

WEEK 8 March 9 (Spring Break—No Class)

WEEK 9 March 16

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#7):

- Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison Chapter 2: Who are we now as parents from a distance? Ch. 2 Pp. 1-32
- You Throw Like a Boy, Kathy Boudin (Xeroxed for RCF; on Blackboard for TU)

WEEK 10 March 23

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#8):

- Women in Prison Chapter 5: Found Guilty: Courtroom Theater and Women without Scripts
- Women in Prison Chapter 6: Welcome to the Concrete Womb: Leave your Dignity at the Door

WEEK 11 March 30

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#9) :

- Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison Chapter 3: Caregivers, Ch. 3 pp. 1-20
- Parenting from inside/out : Voices of mothers in prison Chapter 4: Going Home, Ch 4 pp. 1-12

WEEK 12 April 6

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper (#10) :

- Women in Prison Chapter 7: Forced Dependency: The Prison as Abusive Parent
- Women in Prison Chapter 8: Security and Discipline: Springs Wound Too Tightly

WEEK 13 April 13 Draft the Closing Ceremony

Read and bring a 1-page reaction paper(#11) :

- Women in Prison Chapter 9: Snapshots: Women's Stories, Women's Lives
- Personal Writings _by Kathy Boudin (Xeroxed copies for RCF students, Blackboard copies for TU students)
 1. "A Trilogy of Journeys "
 2. "Net of Souls"

WEEK 14 April 20 Finish Preparations

- “dress rehearsal” for Closing Ceremony
- Final touches for creative project(s)

WEEK 15 April 28 **Closing Ceremony**

- Presentation of Creative Project(s) and Closing Ceremony for all, at RCF

Now the course has ended, but I hope you will continue reading and thinking about the lives of women who have been in prison. I recommend these books for further reading when you have the opportunity:

1. *Paula C. Johnson (2003) Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison. NYU Press*
2. *Lamb, Wally and the women of York Correctional Institution (2003) Couldn't Keep it to Myself: Testimonies From Our Imprisoned Sisters. Regan Books, Harper Collins.*
3. *Bell Gale Chevigny (Ed.)(1999) Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing.Arcade Publishing.*