

Senior Seminar 02499.2
Spring 2020
Dr. Marquita R. Smith

Confinement in African American Literature and Culture



Course Description

In this seminar, we will examine notions of confinement in the United States through African American literature and culture of the 20th and 21st centuries. Our interdisciplinary approach will cover literature, sound, visual art and culture, and cultural criticism related to the topics of abolition, crime and punishment, geography, race, and social justice. Discussions in the course will be guided by the following questions: What are the similarities and differences between historical and contemporary representations of confinement in African American cultural production? What role do race, gender, class, and sexuality play in these narratives? And finally, how does the concept of a carceral society—one in which techniques of regulating and surveilling human behavior extend beyond the prison itself—illuminate new understandings of contemporary issues in American society at large?

Themes: afterlife of slavery, sexuality, gender, class, race, imprisonment, social justice