Instructor: Kenneth Sebastian León, PhD (ksl96@rutgers.edu)

Open to Juniors and Seniors
Fullfills Upper-Level Elective for LCS Major and Minor
Fullfills Elective Seminar for Criminal Justice Major

This course examines the impacts of criminal justice systems on communities of color in the United States, with particular focus on how various social, political, ideological, and economic structures have contributed to the disproportionate placement of Black and Brown bodies under systems of formal social control. After studying fundamental concepts of race and ethnicity, the course will cover the historical precursors and modern-day features of mass incarceration, state surveillance, migration-related controls, and current developments in criminal justice through a critical race theory and critical legal theory framework. The class format generally consists of substantive lectures combined with discussion-driven analyses of assigned readings and multimedia. This is a reading- and discussion-intensive course, open to juniors and seniors only.

Course Learning Goals
Upon completion of the course, students will:

• critically reflect on the criminal justice system’s role in racializing human subjects through a historical and theory-driven perspective;
• understand the historical underpinnings of contemporary justice policies and justice-related social problems;
• situate criminal justice phenomena as part of a broader structural analysis of racial capitalism and political economies of power;
• further develop critical thinking skills and the ability to speak and write clearly and analytically;
• connect a series of social movements to academic literature on race and criminal justice;
• become familiar with the conceptual and empirical bridges linking Latino/a/x scholarship with select theories and perspectives in criminology and criminal justice;
• understand the ways in which systems of state governance, institutions, organizations, commercial enterprises, and non-profits built around and upon the project of mass imprisonment;
• anchor criminal justice policy in electoral politics and the racial politics of crime control;
• understand the special role of three types of institutions: police, corrections, and courts – and their impact on communities of color;
• build confidence in engaging directly with scholarly readings and consider potential scholarship and activism opportunities beyond the Fall 2020 semester

Required Reading*
All reading materials are available free of charge, as part of the Rutgers University Open Access Textbook (OAT) program. Freely available videos (ranging from 2-20 minutes long) will also be assigned and incorporated as de facto “homework” (materials to study on your own time).

Evaluation*
Weekly Reading Summaries = 20%
Midterm Exam = 40%
Final Exam = 40%

*This synopsis is intended for informative purposes only; it is provisional and subject to change before the beginning of the semester.