

This spring, members of the Ripple Effect (Reaching Inside Prisons with Purpose and Love) created a banner to share words of welcome to those impacted by immigration policy. Since last fall, Ripple has extended its outreach to include undocumented immigrants and refugees, as well as families of the incarcerated.

Summer Reading at Danville Correctional Center

BY REBECCA GINSBURG, EJP DIRECTOR

In summer, EJP students at Danville Correctional Center take a break from for-credit upper division coursework and enroll instead in Reading Groups.

These are not-for-credit offerings whose topics are often suggested by EJP students, through a proposal-seeking process we hold each spring. Some groups are co-facilitated by the EJP students themselves, in conjunction with outside instructors. In keeping with the more relaxed summer schedule, there is typically little homework in Reading Groups, beyond reading the assigned texts and coming to class prepared to engage in discussion.

Reading group topics tend to be

more idiosyncratic than our for-credit courses. For instance, this summer we're offering Trauma & Violence, Living Mindfully, American Urban Economics, and a group on zombie literature.

This newsletter features a peek into EJP's Summer 2017 Reading Groups through the lens of instructor reports, online summaries of each EJP classes, written by the teacher. Instructor reports make for great reading. I've often thought they deserve a wider audience.

As you'll see, these reports leave little doubt of the academic abilities of EJP students, not to mention the skills and commitment of our instructors.

Reading these reports, which have been edited only very lightly, may be the next best thing to sitting in a prison classroom for yourself. I hope you enjoy these glimpses into EJP's Reading Groups, and see the value in providing a space for incarcerated students to demonstrate their competence as scholars and group leaders.

Please donate to the Education Justice Project to support our Reading Groups and other higher ed programs. Every donation, every cent, makes a difference. On a budget like ours--we spent just under \$100,000 last fiscal year--no gift is too small. EJP receives 100% of checks mailed to support our work. Thank you!

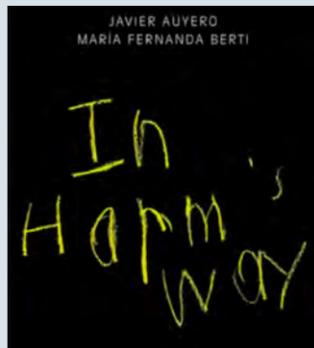
Trauma and Violence

Ian Scott and Michael Tafolla (EJP student), Co-Facilitators

We began our conversation discussing a reference at the beginning of chapter 3 to Norbert Elias' *The Civilizing Process*, which provides an extension of the idea put forward by Weber that one of the defining features of the state is its monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. Specifically, we noted the way in which the types and frequency of interpersonal violence experienced in the Argentinian community under examination would seem to hint at a complete withdrawal of the state. Instead, what we see is the way in which the forces of the state (e.g. police) are strategically deployed with no oversight, leading to official state forces engaging in extractive and exploitative relationships with community residents, thus creating a lot of the violence they are supposed to be preventing.

Another topic we spent a considerable amount of time discussing is the emotional labor taken on by women in situations of interpersonal violence and mass-incarceration. The book notes how men are predominantly the ones who engage in illicit activities (e.g. drug dealing and robbery), and they are also the targets of state police forces, who often use threats of arrest and imprisonment as a way to extract payments/bribes from residents. This leaves women to take care of families, coordinate supports for incarcerated loved ones, and combat the problems faced in the community. This led to

both contradictory acts of violence (e.g. hitting a child to prevent them from going out to get high) and organized community efforts to combat drug abuse amongst children (e.g. Mothers Against Paco [Paco is a cheap cocaine derivative similar to crack]).



The rest of our conversation was spent debating an assertion made by the authors: Because the interpersonal violence experienced by residents is related to state disinvestment in the community, this violence takes on a political character. More specifically, we wondered, based on this chain of logic, when is violence not political? Is the recently fired factory worker who goes out and gets in a drunken bar fight engaging in political violence since their firing resulted from larger questions of political economy? The room was pretty evenly split, with some arguing that you cannot separate violence from its larger political-economic context, while others argued this view eliminates personal responsibility. We ended by discussing how holding these different views would ultimately lead to different policy prescriptions for limiting interpersonal violence. (July 22, 2017)



Islam in America

Millie Wright and Cragg Hardaway (EJP student), Co-Facilitators

Last night we discussed Islamic law and American law, Sharia ban legislation, and the recent anti-Sharia protests. This is a very confusing topic of discussion because people can't help but compare Islamic law to other religious law and systems of constitutional law, but Islamic law has many important differences from other systems of law. We spent some time untangling definitions of the words Sharia, fiqh (jurisprudence), what a Muslim jurist is and does, and notions of

jurisdiction in Islamic law. The readings deal mainly with jurisdiction (what laws do Muslims follow in Muslim-majority countries, what laws do Muslims follow in countries where they are the minority, what laws do non-Muslims follow in Muslim-majority countries, etc) and how Islamic law works as a juridical system of positive law.

An important thing to note first is that non-Muslims are not bound by Islamic law, so there's good no reason to think Muslims are trying to make us all follow their law. Another is that in most of the

world, Muslims view Islamic law and civil law as separate things that only have to be reconciled sometimes, but most do not see a conflict with following religious law for matters of piety and personal conduct and abiding by their nation's civil laws. We dove into some examples like criminal punishment, divorce, contracts, living wills, abortion, gay rights, etc. (There are LGBTQ Muslims? No way! Yes way.)

I think we had a lot of fun with this discussion. Next time, we talk about media representation. (July 20, 2017)



Left, EJP instructors being recognized by their students at our Spring Awards Convocation in May. Right, Angel Pantoja delivered one of three student addresses at the convocation.

Cracking the Coding Interview

Robert Rennie, Facilitator

We revisited an example of a dangerous mistake to make in C involving a null pointer dereference, a buffer overflow, and a misplaced semicolon. We then proceeded to write out, in detail, an implementation of a Linked List in C++. We wrote out an insertion function fully, a search function less thoroughly, and left delete as an exercise. This took the majority of our time. After the break we briefly discussed the idea behind trees, and heaps, and tried to imagine together what an implementation would look like in C++. I thought it'd be cool to discuss graph algorithms and an application of matrix multiplication. They seemed very enthused after my summary. (July 18, 2017)

Urban Economics

Stephen Sherman, Facilitator

This week we read the 2nd half of Marc Doussard's *Degraded Work*, about the rise of contingent labor and how community labor groups fight it. One topic we discussed was "right to work": what the laws mean, where they came from (Koch Sr.!), how they are applied, and their effects on state and local economies. Through the evening, the students peppered me with questions about very widely discussed but very poorly understood policy topics, e.g., public sector pensions, "welfare", collective bargaining, and right to work. The breadth of these discussions, and the students' request for facts/definitions, prompted one student to propose a workshop on "just the facts and statistics" about specific hot-button policy issues. I said that I could do one on welfare policy or globalization. It would be something to consider. (July 6, 2017)

Linear Algebra

Joshua Wen and Simone Sisneros-Thiry, Co-Facilitators

We covered eigenvalues, eigenvectors, and how to find them for 2x2 matrices. From the subsequent exercise session, students seem to understand the definitions, but part of the computations involved factoring quadratic polynomials, which slowed a few students down. I can imagine that some kind of algebra review workshop would be very appreciated by the students. Our six students naturally paired up during the problem sessions, and I think working as a group helped the students digest the material much better. This dynamic didn't seem to be present the last few weeks. I think treating math as a social activity can create a lot positive feedback loops with regards to learning, so I hope this isn't a one-time thing! (July 28, 2017)

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ejp mission

The mission of the Education Justice project is to create a model college-in-prison program that demonstrates the positive impacts of higher education upon incarcerated people, their families, the neighborhoods from which they come, the host institution, and society as a whole.