The topic of this seminar is the political prisoner in the 20th century. The political prisoner may be the quintessential citizen of the modern world, as hero, martyr, or nemesis, but why are there political prisoners? Why not shoot them all, or just tolerate their opposition? To address these and other questions, our examples of the experience of political prisoners and their encounter with repressive states will range around the world. This is a new field of study; there exists almost no scholarly literature on political prisoners as a group. So this will be a collaborative exploration of a topic of (I hope) mutual interest.

This is also a course in Intensive Writing. In other words, your main objective will be to practice historical writing, eventually producing an extensive research paper. The path to this paper will necessitate a great deal of reading and sustained class engagement. It should be the most important class you will take as a History major.

**Learning objectives. By the end of the semester, you should:**

- reach your own conclusions about what a political prisoner is, and why.
- be able to find the familiar and the comparable in unfamiliar historical settings.
- know how to locate and recognize primary and secondary sources appropriate to a topic.
- build an argument from primary sources, and deploy secondary sources in support.
- write a research paper advancing an original argument based upon your research.

**Reading list:**

- William Storey, *Writing History*
- Jan Coetzee, Lynda Gilfillan, and Otakar Hulec, *Fallen Walls*
- Jacobo Timerman: *Prisoner Without A Name, Cell Without a Number*
- Nawal El Saadawi: *Memoirs From the Women's Prison*
- Wei Jingsheng, *Courage to Stand Alone*
- Additional readings to be found on Oncourse

**Writing assignments:** Short (3-5pp.) papers, 30% total. The research paper (minimum 15pp.) will be worth a cumulative 40% of the grade; one-quarter of this grade of this will be for the timeliness and completion of preliminary bibliography and rough draft. The remaining 30% of the grade will be for participation in class discussion, including responses posted to OnCourse and attendance.
Class Schedule Note that some readings, especially those in parentheses, are yet to be determined

Before the semester begins: please read the chapters by Neier and Kaminski on OnCourse, and respond to the forum by Monday evening, August 31, by midnight.

Tues, September 1  Introduction: Who is a political prisoner? What is a prison?
Thurs, 9/3  Introduction to bibliography and the library: Meet in Wells Library W302

Tues., 9/8  Moral dilemmas of imprisonment.  Read: Timerman
Thurs, 9/10  Introduction to primary sources: Meet in Lilly Library

Tues. 9/15  The perspective of a memoir.  Read: el Saadawi
Thurs. 9/17  Prison memoirs in comparison.  Short paper #1 due Thursday

T/Th, 9/22-24  Designing a topic  (Storey)
Discussion: Secondary sources  Draft bibliography due Thursday

T/Th, 9/29-10/1  Ways of looking at the prisoner experience (Laffin, Scarry, Rejali)

T/Th 10/6-8  Politics and the Prisoner: secondary sources  (Applebaum/Wachsmann/O’Malley)

T/Th, 10/13-15  Wei Jingsheng: life in the camps  Short paper #2 due Tuesday
T/Th, 10/20-22  Library
T/Th, 10/27-29  Bibliography and topic discussion, individual meetings
T/Th, 11/3-5  Comparative history (Fallen Walls)  Short paper #3 due Tuesday
T/Th, 11/10-14  Individual meetings  Submit 2pp. outline of research paper
T/Th, 11/17-19  Poster sessions  Prepare poster

Tues, 11/24  Rough draft due  [Thurs, 11/26: THANKSGIVING]
T/Th, 12/1-3  Discussion of rough drafts (individual)
T/Th, 12/8-10  Applying our expertise: Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo  Reading TBA
**Assignments** Some assignments, though not the first ones, may be altered slightly over the course of the semester.

- short response, due August 31 by 8PM. Please read the excerpts by Kaminski and Neier (“Confining Dissent”) on Oncourse, and post a short response to this question: what is special about political prisoners or political imprisonment, compared to criminal prisoners and criminal imprisonment? If possible, refer to Neier and/or Kaminski in your answer, even if you disagree with them. This response will not be graded, as you are not expected to have thought over these issues in any detail yet. A satisfactorily completed response will count toward your participation grade for the semester, and will also help to get the conversation started at our first class meeting.

Bibliography assignment. Due Thursday, 9/3, 7PM (post to OnCourse or submit by email). The assignment will be distributed in class. This assignment, satisfactorily completed, will count toward your participation grade.

Paper #1. Thursday, 9/17. 3-5pp. Comparison: Timerman and El Saadawi. Jacobo Timerman and Nawal El Saadawi were imprisoned by very different regimes, and might not have a lot to say to each other. Were there experiences similar, though, or different? Choose some points of comparison/contrast, and consider what – external forces? their own personalities? something else – might account for those similarities or differences.

Paper #2. Tuesday, 10/13. 3pp. Based upon your reading of Wei Jingsheng’s prison letters, prepare a list of five possible research topics. What can one learn about the camps, about China, about Wei himself? What does one not learn, and how might you find out? For each topic, prepare a descriptive paragraph, including hypotheses. Be sure to refer to specific places in the text. What kinds of archival material would you want to find to augment what you know from the letters? Attach a bibliography of five items (none of which you need to consult, but you should verify their relevance to your topics.

Paper #4. Tuesday, 11/3. 3-5pp. Choose two (or more, if necessary) of the six memoirs in *Fallen Walls*, one from South Africa and one from Czechoslovakia. Discuss one or two points of comparison or contrast. Be sure to make use of the introductory essays, appropriately referenced.

**The Research Paper**

Begin work on the research paper as soon as possible. The first thing you need to do (after thinking about what country or regime interests you) is to generate a bibliography of possible secondary sources, and to find a primary source, in this case a prison diary or a collection of letters from prison, etc. Use IUCAT to build your bibliography, which should cover such things as the imprisoning regime and the movement the prisoner represented, as well as the prisoner. If you have difficulty searching, let me know immediately. (In this case, I will ask for a specific, typed list of the search terms you have used.) Consult also: James Bennett, *Political Prisoners and Trials: A Worldwide Annotated Bibliography*, which is on reserve in the library. A draft bibliography, containing no fewer than 15 works, is due on Tuesday, 9/22. It will be graded for the variety and depth of the sources.

Second, you will need an argument. A paper that simply recounts a story is not a history paper – and would also be boring to read. There are many possible directions to go; the secondary sources we read may help you find one that works for you. Some possible questions to ask: How does the physical experience of prison affect the prisoner? Is the political prisoner an opponent of
the political system? Does s/he expect to be rehabilitated or freed? Does s/he see him/herself playing a role in a larger struggle? What is the prisoner’s relationship to society? How are the political ideas expressed by the prisoner similar to those expressed on the outside? Was the prisoner in tune with the direction of his/her contacts? How do the prisoners’ ideas change over time? What were the causes and effects of such change? Ask these questions, and others, as you analyze your sources.

Remember that primary materials are not illustration or background, but the core of your evidence. Develop a clear argument, but be ready to modify it as you work. I recommend writing a thesis statement down on an index card, then keeping it in view when you are looking for material, when you are reading, and when you are writing. This will ensure that you do not get lost on irrelevant (albeit fascinating) information.

Outline: due November 10.

Poster session. The class sessions on November 17 and 19 will be devoted to a presentation of projects. Prepare, on a posterboard, the following: 1. A concise statement of the paper’s topic. 2. A one-paragraph summary of the argument. 3. A short example of a primary source, plus a short analysis showing how that source contributes to your argument. 4. Background information on your case(s), including key dates and names – this information should be no more than one page, in the form of a glossary or timeline. Pictures or other illustrations are much encouraged. During the class, you will present your work to your classmates in an informal way.

Rough draft: due November 24. As you write, pay close attention to the paper guidelines at www.iub.edu/~histweb/seminars/index.html, and to the advice in Storey, Writing History.

Final draft: due 12/8. Papers turned in late will be penalized.
Course Policies and Guidelines:

Extensions on papers will only be granted by prior arrangement, due to a documented family or medical emergency. Technical problems (cars and computers) are your own responsibility. If a paper is turned in late without prior arrangement, one full grade will be deducted every day (weekends included), beginning on the due date; papers turned in late on the day due will lose half a grade. **You must complete every assignment to pass the class.**

**Contact:** You are expected to have and to use your IU email address. Be sure to check it for messages relating to class. Some announcements may be posted to the Oncourse site as well.

**Classroom conduct:** Please come to discussions prepared to listen and participate. To do well in this class, you should plan to attend every class. Please be on time to class, and do remember that your attendance and attention is a courtesy to your fellow students and to me. Be aware that sporadic attendance through the semester will also affect your grade. You should do the reading assigned before class.

**Electronics:** No electronics of any kind may be used in class; this includes laptops as well as cell phones or anything with headphones or a screen.

**Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Then, submit to me a letter from **Disability Services** (Franklin Hall 006, 855-7578, iubdss@indiana.edu) in the first two weeks of class so that I can address your needs.

**Religious Holidays:** If you anticipate a conflict between this course’s schedule and your observance of a religious holiday, please contact me within the first two weeks of class. You may want first to consult [www.indiana.edu/~vpfaa/holidays.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~vpfaa/holidays.shtml)

**Academic Honesty & Plagiarism**
I expect that any work you submit will be fully your own, in accordance with the IU Code of Student Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct (Part III). Uncited, plagiarized material shall be treated as academically dishonest, and the paper will be assigned an ‘F’. I strongly suggest you visit [www.indiana.edu/~college/plagiarism/index.shtml](http://www.indiana.edu/~college/plagiarism/index.shtml) - you will find an in-depth discussion of plagiarism there. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Office of Student Ethics.

Resources on writing and referencing: [www.iub.edu/~histweb/seminars/index.html](http://www.iub.edu/~histweb/seminars/index.html) and Storey, *Writing History*. 