
Understanding American Mass Incarceration Through the Lens of Prison Media

Kate McQueen

One of the many things that sets the United States apart from the rest of the world is its reliance on mass incarceration. The U.S. currently holds circa 2.5 million people in prisons and jails. Despite this large number, most of what Americans (and world citizens) know about incarceration comes from entertainment sources—Hollywood movies and TV-shows—or from news media with limited access to spaces of incarceration. The stories they produce are often sensationalized or one-sided. Thankfully, there are better sources, produced by incarcerated people that provide audiences with a more nuanced picture of what life is like inside prison walls. This presentation offers an introduction to the prisoner-run media ecosystem, which includes newspapers, magazines, podcasts and even documentaries. Participants will get an overview of the history of prison journalism, how media centers inside prisons operate, where to find prisoner-produced media to use in class, and some possible topics appropriate for students at the high school level.

To register, please contact:

Nadja Borowski

Beraterin im Unterstützungssystem

des IQ M-V, SSA Rostock

Schwerpunkt Englisch Sek. 1

Telefon: 038231/77 85 57

Mobil: 0152/28754058

E-Mail: n.wieland@iq.bm.mv-regierung.de

Organizers

Dr. Katja Schmidt & Andrea Drobek, Universität Rostock

Nadja Borowski & Heike Kittel, IQ M-V

Prof. (em.) Dr. Gabriele Linke, Universität Rostock

Teach About the USA

Annual Rostock Teacher Seminar 2025

Friday, 14 March 2025
9:00 – 15:30



Institut für Qualitätsentwicklung
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (IQ M-V)



Place: Internationales
Begegnungszentrum
Rostock e.V.
Bergstr. 7a, 18057 Rostock



Program

9:00: Welcome and Introductions

by the organizational team

LECTURE & DISCUSSION

9:15 -10:45

Bridging Continents: Black German-American Connections in Literature, Activism, and Culture

Lauren J. Brooks

North Carolina State University

Coffee Break

LECTURE & DISCUSSION

11:15 - 12:45

Understanding American Mass Incarceration Through the Lens of Prison Media

Kate McQueen

Fulbright U.S. scholar

Lunch

WORKSHOP

13:45 -15:15

Media and Information Literacy: The MIL Heroes & Villains

David Schneider

DW Akademie

15:15 Concluding Discussion and Farewell

15:30 End of Seminar

Faculty



Lauren J. Brooks

(Ph.D., The Pennsylvania State University, 2018) is Associate Teaching Professor at North Carolina State University. She is currently in Münster, Germany, conducting research in Black German Studies, a project funded by the U.S. Fulbright Commission through June 2025.

Another aspect of her research focuses on decentering authority in German language pedagogy by empowering students through project-based learning and rethinking traditional methods of assessment. She has also written on Kafka and his absurdist treatment of authority across his corpus by analyzing his humor through the U.S. situation comedy *Seinfeld*, a topic she also enjoys incorporating into her teaching. Since 2010, she has taught a range of German language curriculum from novice to advanced, including writing-intensive, conversation, film and media, and literature and cultural studies courses. In her free time, she enjoys being outside, lifting heavy things, cats, and wine.



Kate McQueen

is a writer and educator specializing in narrative journalism. She serves as editorial director for Pollen Initiative, a California-based nonprofit organization dedicated to cultivating media centers inside prisons.

Kate's writing on criminal justice issues has appeared in *The Atavist*, *Alta Journal*, *Next City*, *JSTOR Daily*, *Journalism History*, and *Literary Journalism Studies*. She is currently a Fulbright U.S. Scholar, based at the University of Leipzig.



David Schneider

is a Project Officer at DW Akademie, where he has been part of the Digital Sphere team since 2022. The team focuses on topics such as Media and Information Literacy, Media and

Dialogue, and Digital Authoritarianism. David holds a Master's degree in International Studies / Peace and Conflict Research, completed in 2021, and a Bachelor's degree in Sociology from Goethe University Frankfurt, earned in 2018. His work and interests center on the complex intersections of media, dialogue, and democracy.

Abstracts

Media and Information Literacy: The MIL Heroes & Villains

David Schneider

This interactive session introduces the MIL Heroes & Villains guidebook, a visual storytelling approach designed to empower young people to navigate the complexities of today's media landscape. The guidebook follows five Heroes as they tackle challenges such as cyberbullying, fake news, hate speech, propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation. Participants will engage with the material by analyzing American media messages to practice identifying these challenges and explore how storytelling can make these concepts both memorable and relevant.

Bridging Continents: Black German-American Connections in Literature, Activism, and Culture

Lauren J. Brooks

The intersection of Black American and Afro-German experiences reveals rich, transatlantic dialogues on race, identity, and resistance. This presentation examines key moments in these cultural exchanges, focusing on the influence of Black American activists and intellectuals, such as Audre Lorde, on the Afro-German movement. Lorde's work with Afro-German women in the 1980s catalyzed a new wave of activism and literature that challenged Germany's historical erasure of its colonial past and the marginalization of Black voices. Drawing from historical examples—including the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and Germany's colonial and post-war realities—the talk highlights the voices and strategies of marginalized communities that have challenged these structures. Special attention will be given to the intersection of race, gender, and class, and the role of art, literature, and grassroots activism in fostering change. By comparing resistance movements such as Black Lives Matter in the U.S. and Afro-German activism spearheaded by figures like May Ayim, Audre Lorde, and Katharina Oguntoye, the presentation offers insights into shared struggles and unique approaches to combating racism. Grounded in interdisciplinary research, this session aims to equip educators with tools to incorporate transnational perspectives on race and resistance into their classrooms. Through comparative analyses and discussion, participants will gain strategies for fostering critical conversations about social justice and equity in their teaching practices.
