

**ENGL 275**  
**JUSTICE AND LITERATURE**  
**Tues/Thurs 1:00 – 2:15**

Katy Ryan  
[kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu](mailto:kohearnr@mail.wvu.edu)

Spring 2021

Redaction is a dialect after prison.  
--Reginald Dwayne Betts, *Felon*

Our work this semester will be to better understand the history, literature, and geography of the modern prison in the United States. The class will provide an introduction to the field of prison studies with a focus on contemporary U.S. literature. We will read one novel, one memoir, one book of poems, one collection of essays, and a few shorter works.

Among our guiding questions will be: What is the literary history of imprisonment? How did the United States come to lead the world in incarceration? What economic role do prisons play in the Appalachian region? What does education look like inside prison? What might transformative and restorative justice models have to offer? And how does the study of literature help answer these questions?

**Possible Books**

Dwayne Betts, *Felon*

Ernest Gaines, *A Lesson Before Dying*

Patrice Khan-Cullors and asha bandele, *When They Call You A Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*

H. Bruce Franklin, ed. *Prison Writing in 20<sup>th</sup>-C. America*

**Grade Distribution**

Two essays (6 pp.)	50
Five reader responses (500 words)	20
Class participation	20
Class presentation	10