



FACULDADE DE DIREITO
UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA

ESTUDOS INTERDISCIPLINARES

URBAN INEQUALITY AND CRIME

PROFESSOR ELEANOR M. MILLER

This course is being taught by a visiting Fulbright Scholar, a member of the Chicago School of Criminology. The Chicago School tradition is one with a focus on ethnographic methods and analysis that seeks to connect the lived experience of people in neighborhoods as seen through their own eyes with changes at the state, national and global levels to account for changes in the nature and amount of crime. The particular problem to be explored in this course is how the United States became the country with the highest incarceration rates in the world during a period mostly characterized by declining crime rates. This is particularly interesting at a time when Portugal was contemplating a move in exactly the opposite direction. More important in light of the recent riots and protests in the U.S. over the failure of the court system to indict members of the police in the deaths of a series of young, black males, how did the majority of those imprisoned during that period come to be poorly educated, young, black males with drug-related convictions?

Professor Miller will argue that in the future this period of American legal and criminal justice history may be seen as a blight on the U.S. every bit equivalent to slavery and the racist regulation of black citizens commonly referred to as the Jim Crow Laws after the Civil War and before the Civil Rights Movement. Through the reading of scholars either directly or indirectly related to the Chicago School, this course will explore the socio-economic, political, legal, cultural, and structural conditions that made mass, racialized incarceration a reality and the difficulties the U.S. confronts in dismantling this system.

To expose students to the ethnographic reality that is captured in scholarly articles, charts and graphs examined in the course students are asked to view and discuss in class segments of the award-winning HBO Series "The Wire," which paints a stark and very realistic picture of the competing pressures experienced, on the one hand, by residents of the poorest ghettos in the U.S. as they go about trying to earn a living, often in the drug trade, and the police, prosecutors and defense attorneys, on the other hand, whose job it is to bring those who they see as enemies in the War on Drugs to justice.

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