

September 18, 2008

PPAI 2200: The Political Economy of Punishment
Professor Glenn C. Loury

Writing Assignment #1 [Also posted on the course website.]

This assignment is due on Thursday, September 25, at the start of class.

To do this assignment, you will need to read the articles by Hanna Rosin and Eric Schlosser in the Atlantic monthly, as well as the various witness testimony at the Hearings of the Joint Economic Committee on the cost of mass incarceration, the chapters from David Garland's book, "The Culture of Control," and my first Tanner Lecture (reprinted in my small MIT Press book on Mass Incarceration)

Your assignment is to choose one salient aspect of the policing/punishment system for order-maintenance which we will be studying in this course, and to which you have been introduced by the readings listed above. This can be either some feature of the system that you think is wrong, even horribly wrong, and that is in need of reform. Or, it can be some aspect of the system that, despite whatever problems there may be, you think is working reasonably well and deserves to be recognized as such.

I want you to make an argument, again based on the information available in the readings and/or on other information to which you may be privy, defending your judgment regarding what's wrong/right about how we're doing things in this area of public policy. This defense should identify clearly both the criteria of judgment you employ to conduct your evaluation, and the evidence you have seen that supports your particular judgment in this regard.

This paper should be three to four double spaced pages. It is due in one week, as noted above. (FYI, I do not accept late papers under any circumstances.) I will have office hours per usual on Wednesday of next week, 9am-noon, and can also arrange appointments via e-mail should this prove inconvenient. Please feel free to run your ideas past me in the office before turning-in your paper, though this is not required. Prof. GL