COURSE INFORMATION

Materials – Textbooks, Readings, Supplementary Readings:

Required Reading:


*(Please note that this text is not yet published and you will be provided readings for the class)*

Other materials/readings as assigned and posted in DocSharing in eCollege.

Course Description/Explanation:

Offender reentry is the process of transition of offenders from prisons/jail to the community. This class will provide students with an in-depth analysis of the issues impacting offender reentry, including employment, treatment, family reunification, housing issues as well as barriers and impediments to offender reentry.

Student Learning Outcomes/Core Competencies:

1. Think critically about important issues in offender reentry
2. Problem-solve solutions to practical issues and policy concerns related to offender reentry
3. Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Instructional Methods/Activities/Assessments

This course will provide a variety of activities and assessments to assist you in achieving the outcomes/objectives for the course. You will work toward achieving these outcomes through discussions/comments, papers, assignments, and tests. Below is an explanation of each course requirement including due date, assignment instructions, and other requirements.

Please note that a core competency of this course is critical thinking. Critical thinking requires students to think through situations, facts, and issues in an open-minded and objective way in an effort to analyze and evaluate information in an informed manner. Qualities of a critical thinker (and of arguments that embody critical thinking) include:

- **Certainty is not always necessary for a critical thinker; possibility and probability should always be a consideration**—in other words, just because the book tells you it is true, doesn’t mean that there may not be another solution or possibility to consider. The way that facts relate to one another—and not just fact alone—should be used to determine truth.

- **Critical thinkers are not only independent thinkers; they are also fair-minded in that they are willing to consider all points of view, and they are careful to take every aspect of an argument into consideration**—your way of thinking may not necessarily be the only way or the right way of thinking. Consider other perspectives.

- **Consider evidence (facts), source (from what source did your evidence come from), and motivations (what might be the underlying motivation behind these facts)**—in other words, gather information from credible sources and evaluation these sources/factual information in the context of what you have been asked to discuss/evaluate.

As defined by the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, critical thinking is:

“The intellectually disciplined process of actively and skillfully conceptualizing, applying, analyzing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action. In its exemplary form, it is based on universal intellectual values that transcend subject matter divisions: clarity, accuracy, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, depth, breadth, and fairness.”

(Scriven, M. & Paul, R. Presented at the 8th Annual International Conference on Critical Thinking and Education Reform, Summer 1987.)
When preparing discussions/comments/assignments/papers/etc., use the following to help you critically think through each task. You will be graded (in part) on how well you are able to perform this skill.

- Determine the problem/issue you are trying to solve. Make sure you remain open-minded and objective and be aware of your own biases on the subject and put them aside
- Develop a hypothesis and/or possible solution to the problem/issue. Brainstorm other possible solutions. Think about the pros and cons of the problem/issue
- Gather information on the problem/issue that may support or contradict your position
- Analyze your facts. Don’t assume anything. Evaluate the facts objectively
- Determine a reasonable conclusion based on all of the facts
- Make sure your facts (and the reporting of the facts) are accurate. You may assume a causal relationship but there might be other possible conclusions to be drawn based on other factors. Be sure to evaluate what those might be

**Introduction/Discussion Posts**: (1 Introduction @ 50 points; 4 discussion posts @ 100 points each = 450 course points)

**Student Learning Outcomes #1-#3**: Think critically about important issues in offender reentry; Problem-solve solutions to practical issues and policy concerns related to offender reentry; Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen

The **Introduction** is a chance for you to ‘meet’ your colleagues (although most of you likely know each other by now) in the class and an opportunity to introduce yourself to your professor. You will also be required to answer a course-related question. Specific instructions on what to post are available when you click on Introduction in Week #1. The Introductory post is due on **Monday of Week #1** of the course.

The **Discussions** are directly related to the assigned readings. Upon completion of the assigned readings, you are expected to engage in an ongoing discussion/debate with your classmates. Your contributions to the discussion forums will be graded for quality and a detailed analysis linking the material to a critical appraisal of theory, policy, and practice. The introduction of outside materials in not mandatory (unless otherwise noted in the discussion topic assignment), but is highly recommended. In all cases, students must cite in-text and provide a full bibliography/works cited at the end of their post for all citations mentioned in the post (See information later in the syllabus for more information on citing utilizing APA citation format. Also see the ‘How to Cite’ FactSheet ).
These posts should be the equivalent of 1 page in length or a minimum of 250 words. The specific discussion assignment is located in each unit Week by clicking on the Discussion link. Posts are due by 11:00PM CST on Thursdays.

Assessment Method: Discussion posts will be graded using the Discussion Post Grading Rubric.

Comment Posts: (20 comments @ 10 points each = 200 course points)

Student Learning Outcomes #1-#3: Think critically about important issues in offender reentry; Problem-solve solutions to practical issues and policy concerns related to offender reentry; Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen

Comment posts are responses you make to the discussion posts that you and your classmates post each week. You are required to make a minimum of five comments each week. I would strongly encourage you to engage your colleagues well past the four-comment minimum in order to maximize your opportunity for meaningful discussion and learning.

Comment posts should be meaningful. Merely agreeing or disagreeing with a classmate will not be looked upon favorably and will result in a loss of points. A meaningful post is one that moves the discussion forward in some substantive way through providing one’s perspective, additional information through research, or reframing the discussion in some new way. You are expected to engage in an ongoing discussion/debate with your classmates. Your comments will be graded for quality, and relevance. Your comments will also be graded based on your ability to engage in critical thinking. Students must provide one outside source for at least one comment that they make.

NO LATE COMMENTS ARE ACCEPTED. All comment posts are due by 11:00PM CST on Saturdays.

Assessment Method: Comments will be graded using the Comments Grading Rubric attached to the Discussion Post Grading Rubric. The discussion and Comments for each week will be graded together and posted as one grade (Discussion = 100 + Comments 5@ 10 points each = 150 points/week).
**Assignment** (1 assignment with multiple parts @ 350 points each = 350 course points; 25 points assigned for the paper topic and 25 points assigned for making 5 constructive comments to 5 different colleagues; 100 points assigned for the paper; 100 points assigned for posting a power point presentation of your paper in DocSharing for your colleagues to review; 100 points assigned for peer grading of the power point presentations.

Student Learning Outcomes #1-#3: Think critically about important issues in offender reentry; Problem-solve solutions to practical issues and policy concerns related to offender reentry; Enhance communication skills and reading/research/writing acumen

Assignment Instructions: Students are required to complete one major assignment for this course. This assignment contains multiple parts and so you should be very careful to ensure that you complete and turn in the various components of the assignment on time.

This assignment requires that you evaluate a reentry issue in some depth and apply it to what you have learned from your text. The assignment will represent students’ observations of their readings and outside source materials, a critical evaluation of their topic of choice, and thoughts on how best to address problems/issues/policies inherent in their topic. In addition to material contained in the text, students MUST utilize a minimum of eight outside sources to inform their paper. These sources MUST be peer-reviewed publications or governmental reports—some popular sources (NY Times, other periodicals) are acceptable, but no Wikipedia.

Keep in mind that the paper will require extensive research as you may have to hunt for laws/agency policies/practices, etc. I would highly recommend that you all start on this paper as soon as the course begins and to use each other as resources for locating information that you might need. Many of you work ‘in the field’ and are rich sources of information. Please note, however, that in all instances the assignment is an individual and original contribution and not a group project and will be graded accordingly.

The paper topic you post need only be a few meaningful sentences. Papers must be a minimum of 10 pages in length (does not include references), maximum 12-point font, 1-inch margins, include your name on the paper, and utilize proper APA citation format. Powerpoint presentations should include a minimum of 7 slides.
Students should organize their assignment as follows and turn in paper components as noted.

- Identify a reentry topic of importance/meaning to you. Your topic needs to be specific. For example, you should **not** tell me that you wish to explore the issue of housing and reentry but that you **are** interested in evaluating the impact of NIMBY policies and practices in Houston, Texas or in 2 or 3 large metropolitan cities.

You will post your topic selection in the **Week #1 Discussion link entitled Paper Topics** by **11:00PM on Saturday** of Week #1. Students are expected to read and respond to at least 5 colleagues’ topic posts with suggestions on how to improve/augment their topic choice by **11:00PM on Sunday of Week #1**. This component of the assignment is worth 50 points (25 points for turning in the paper topic and 25 points for responding constructively to 5 colleagues’ paper topic posts). When this assignment is graded, the professor will also provide constructive comments.

**Assessment Method:** Students will receive constructive feedback via the discussion board from their colleagues and in the gradebook from their professor.

- Provide a general overview of the issue and a specific discussion of your topic. Continuing the example above, you would need to provide an overview of housing concerns and offender reentry and then specifically address NIMBY; what is it, why is it a problem, what is the current state of practice regarding NIMBY, etc.

- Provide a critical evaluation of this topic including information that supports and/or disputes current policy and practice. In order to do this, you will need to locate current policy and practice in the form of laws/policies/procedures, etc. I am telling you now that this will be challenging.

- Provide a discussion regarding how your topic ‘fits in’ with **at least two** of the dynamics of offender reentry as outlined in the text (i.e., stigma and public opinion; risk, risk prediction, and recidivism; resilience and desistance; risk management and risk reduction; and the community. Do not overlook the need for a comprehensive discussion here. The idea is for you to critically link these dynamics with your topic.

- Provide an analysis on how best to improve/address this topic, including providing an example of ‘best practices’ (if they exist). Whether best practice exists or not, you must develop 5 specific policy suggestions on how to address this issue.
The paper assignment is due by **11:00PM CST on Tuesday of Week #5** of the course. As noted above, papers must be a **minimum of 10 pages** in length (does not include references), maximum 12-point font, 1-inch margins, include your name on the paper, and utilize proper APA citation format. This component of the assignment is worth 100 points.

**Assessment Method:** Students will be assessed using the Paper Assignment Grading Rubric.

- Provide a Powerpoint presentation that clearly and concisely explains the salient points of your paper. You must clearly state your topic, provide background information regarding the topic in general, your specific concern related to the topic, an overview of current practice, examples of best practice (if they exist), 5 specific policy suggestions on how to change/improve current policy/practice related to this topic.

The powerpoint component of this assignment is due by **11:00PM CST on Wednesday of Week #5** of the course. As noted above, presentations must include a **minimum of 7 slides**. Your presentation must be clear, concise, and easily understood and utilize proper APA citation format. You must upload your presentation into **DocSharing** so that your colleagues may review it. In order to do this, you must upload and click on **Entire class** or others will not be able to view your presentation. The powerpoint component of the assignment is worth 100 points.

Peer evaluations of powerpoint presentations are due by **11:00PM CST on Friday of Week #5** of the course. You must peer evaluate 10 of your peer’s powerpoint presentations. The peer evaluation of the powerpoint presentation is worth 100 points. You will be graded on the insightful comments you make on your peers’ projects, including at least one suggestion for improvement. Your peer evaluations should be turned in under the Assignment link **Peer Evaluations** located in Week #5.

**Assessment Method:** Students will be assessed using the Powerpoint/Peer Evaluation Grading Rubric.
Course Pre/Pos-test (not graded)

Pre and post-tests allow the professor to assess your baseline (foundation) knowledge of a particular subject at the time that you enter a course and the degree of increase in knowledge at the end of the course. This pre/post-test is comprised of no more than 10 questions that will assess your knowledge. You will be asked to complete the pre-test by Friday of Week #1 and your post-test by Friday of Week #5. These tests will not be graded (they are used for assessment purposes only).

GRADING

Assignments for this course will be scored using a points system. Below is an explanation of how each assignment type will be scored.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment Type</th>
<th># of Assignments</th>
<th>Point Value</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Topic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerpoint Presentation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Evaluation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre/Post-test</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>1000</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Grades earned on each assignment will be added together and will be divided by the total number of points possible in the course. Below is the overall point scale/grading schema for the course.

Total points possible for the term = 1000.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1000 - 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>899 - 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>799 - 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>699 - 600</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>599 and below</td>
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</table>
Grades will be available in the gradebook so that students can track their progress in the course in ‘real time’.

### TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS

1. You will need regular access to a computer with a broadband Internet connection. The minimum computer requirements for Ecollege are:
   - Any current Flash-compliant browser (eg. Internet Explorer 7 or Firefox 3.0)
   - 512 MB of RAM, 1 GB or more preferred
   - Broadband connection required – courses are heavily video intensive
   - Video display capable of high-color 16-bit display – 1024 x 768 or higher resolution
   - A sound card and speakers or headphones

   Current anti-virus software must be installed and kept up to date

   Some classes may have specific class requirements for additional software. These requirements will be listed on the course offerings page. Most home computers purchased within the last 3-4 years meet or surpass these requirements.

2. You will need some additional free software for enhanced web browsing. Ensure that you download the free versions of the following software:

   - Adobe Reader
   - Adobe Flash Player

3. At a minimum, you must have Microsoft Office 2003, XP, 2007 or OpenOffice. Microsoft Office is the standard office productivity software utilized by faculty, students, and staff. Microsoft Word is the standard word processing software, Microsoft Excel is the standard spreadsheet software, and Microsoft PowerPoint is the standard presentation software. Copying and pasting, along with attaching/uploading documents for assignment submission, will also be required. If you do not have Microsoft Office, you can check with the bookstore to see if they have any student copies.

### ACCESS AND NAVIGATION

This course will be facilitated using eCollege. To log in to eCollege/the course, use the eCollege/MyLeo log-in and password you received during the enrollment process.
COMMUNICATION AND SUPPORT

Interaction with Instructor Statement:

My primary form of communication with the class will be through Email and Announcements. Any changes to the syllabus or other important information critical to the class will be disseminated to students in this way via your official University Email address available to me through MyLeo and in Announcements. It will be your responsibility to check your University Email and Announcements regularly.

Students who Email me outside of regular office hours can expect a reply within 24 hours M-F. Students who Email me during holidays or over the weekend should expect a reply by the end of the next regularly scheduled business day.

eCollege Student Technical Support:

It is reassuring to know that technical support is available to make your online learning experience convenient. All you have to do is call or email and a knowledgeable representative will help you solve your technical issues.

myLeo Support:

Your myLeo email address is required to send and receive all student correspondence. Please email helpdesk@tamuc.edu or call us at 903-468-6000 with any questions about setting up your myLeo email account. You may also access information at https://leo.tamuc.edu.

Internet Access:

An Internet connection is necessary to participate in discussions and assignments, access readings, transfer course work, and receive feedback from your professor. View the requirements as outlined in Technology Requirements above for more information.
Course Specific Procedures:

Academic Honesty

Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including (but not limited to) receiving a failing grade on the assignment, the possibility of failure in the course and dismissal from the University. Since dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. In **ALL** instances, incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Department Head. Please be aware that academic dishonesty includes (but is not limited to) cheating, plagiarism, and collusion.

**Cheating** is defined as:
- Copying another's test of assignment
- Communication with another during an exam or assignment (i.e. written, oral or otherwise)
- Giving or seeking aid from another when not permitted by the instructor
- Possessing or using unauthorized materials during the test
- Buying, using, stealing, transporting, or soliciting a test, draft of a test, or answer key

**Plagiarism** is defined as:
- Using someone else's work in your assignment without appropriate acknowledgement
- Making slight variations in the language and then failing to give credit to the source

**Collusion** is defined as:
- Collaborating with another, without authorization, when preparing an assignment
  If you have any questions regarding academic dishonesty, ask. Otherwise, I will assume that you have full knowledge of the academic dishonesty policy and agree to the conditions as set forth in this syllabus.

Students should also reference the following link for more detailed information.

Policy for Reporting Problems with eCollege
Students who encounter eCollege-based problems with submitting assignments/exams, etc., are required to do the following:

Call 1-866-656-5511 or 720-931-3847 (direct), or through the Online Chat by clicking on the "Tech Support" tab within your eCollege course. You may also Email helpdesk@online.tamuc.org

Hours: The eCollege helpdesk is open 24/7 to meet your needs.

Your call will be logged and I will check with the Tech Support staff to confirm your call. Once I have confirmed your call, I will contact you regarding the issue.

Only eCollege-based problems will be addressed. Make sure your internet connection is working and viable when taking tests or turning in assignments.

Attendance Policy

While this is an online course, students are expected to ‘attend class’ and actively participate. Student participation/activity will be monitored by the professor. Students should plan to dedicate approximately 15-20 hours/week of time to this course, of which approximately 1 hour/week should be spent in the discussion board (reading posts and comments and conversing with others).

APA Citation Format Policy

It is very important that you learn how to cite properly. In some ways, citations are more important than the actual text of your paper/assignment. Therefore, you should take this task seriously and devote some time to understanding how to cite properly. If you take the time to understand this process up front, it will save you a significant amount of time in the long run (not to mention significant deductions in points).

In the social and behavioral sciences (including Criminal Justice), we use APA (American Psychological Association) format. As a rule of thumb, one cites whenever they are paraphrasing other people’s words or when they quote other’s words directly. You may learn to cite from a variety of different sources including the APA Tutorial and the sources listed below and in the Getting Started section of your course.

www.apastyle.org
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/
It is the student’s responsibility to understand how to cite properly. If you have questions, feel free to ask.

**Late Work**

In principle, I do not accept late work and do not believe in allowing students to turn in work after the due date. My position is that everyone knows the rules of engagement at the beginning of the term and that it is the student’s responsibility to ensure that they plan accordingly to submit their assignments in a timely manner. However, I also do understand that sometimes there are circumstances outside one’s control that may impact timely submission of assignments. To that end, I have developed a policy on late work. Please note that this policy applies **ONLY** to your discussions, paper, and powerpoint presentations, **not** your comments, paper topic submissions, or peer evaluations.

Late assignments will be accepted after the due date and time up to 1 day (24 hours) late. Twenty (20) points will be deducted from all late assignments. Assignments turned in more than one day late **will not** be accepted/graded.

**Drop Course Policy**

Students should take responsibility for dropping themselves from the course according to University policy should this become necessary.

**University Specific Procedures:**

**ADA Statement**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

**Office of Student Disability Resources and Services**
**Texas A&M University-Commerce**
**Student Conduct**

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See *Code of Student Conduct from Student Guide Handbook*). Students should also consult the Rules of Netiquette for more information regarding how to interact with students in an online forum: [http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)

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### COURSE OUTLINE / CALENDAR

Every effort will be made to adhere to the course schedule as noted below. However, unforeseen circumstances may require changes to the schedule. In that case, changes will be announced via University Email and in Announcements. The professor reserves the right to change the schedule if necessary and depending on the progress of the class. I highly recommend that you follow the schedule outlined below **VERY CAREFULLY** so that you are sure to complete readings as assigned and turn your assignments in on time.

Please note that all discussions/comments/assignments are due by 11:00PM CST in eCollege on the day they are due as outlined in the syllabus. Please note that this course runs on a Monday-Sunday schedule.

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**WEEK #1—Dimensions of Offender Reentry**
**Monday**
Read the syllabus carefully. Post a Week #1 Introduction where you introduce yourself, accept the conditions of the syllabus, agree to the Rules of Netiquette, and answer the question I pose. Please note that this post is required for ALL students and will be graded. The link to the Rules of Netiquette may be found under Course and University Procedures/Policies under Student Conduct or here: [http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html](http://www.albion.com/netiquette/corerules.html)

This week’s readings will contextualize the reentry problem for you and introduce you to some of the significant problems offenders face when they reenter society.

**Readings from the Text**

*Introduction*
*Chapter 1*: Reentry in Context
*Chapter 2*: Parole
*Chapter 3*: Housing and Reentry
*Chapter 4*: Education and Employment and Reentry

**Thursday**
Complete Discussion Assignment #1

**Friday**
Complete course pre-test

**Saturday**
Complete Comments for Discussion Assignment #1
Paper Topic due

**Sunday**
Paper Topic comments due

**WEEK #2—Dimensions of Offender Reentry, Part II**
Monday

This week’s readings will continue to explore issues that impact offenders once they leave prison and are returned to the community.

Readings from the Text

*Chapter 5:* Families and Children and Reentry  
*Chapter 6:* Incarcerated Parents and Reentry  
*Chapter 7:* Physical Health and Offender Reentry  
*Chapter 8:* Mental Health and Offender Reentry  
*Chapter 9:* Gender and Offender Reentry

Thursday

Complete Discussion Assignment #2

Saturday

Comments for Discussion #2 due

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**WEEK #3—The Dynamics of Offender Reentry**

Monday

This week’s readings provide a variety of ‘lenses’ through which to view the offender reentry process.

Readings from the Text

*Chapter 10:* Stigma and Public Opinion  
*Chapter 11:* Risk, Risk Prediction, and Recidivism  
*Chapter 12:* Resilience and Desistance  
*Chapter 13:* Risk Management and Risk Reduction  
*Chapter 14:* The Community

Thursday

Complete Discussion Assignment #3

Saturday

Comments for Discussion #3 due

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**WEEK #4—A Blueprint for Change**
This week’s readings provide the framework for reorienting our thinking about offender reentry.

**Readings from the Text**

*Chapter 15: A Strengths-based Approach to Offender Reentry*
*Chapter 16: A Narrative for Offender Reentry*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Discussion Assignment #4 Due</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Comments on Discussion #4 Due</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**WEEK #5—Rethinking Offender Reentry**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>There are no readings for this week.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Paper Due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>PowerPoint presentation due in DocSharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>Powerpoint peer evaluations due</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Course Post-test due</td>
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