

**Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges (AALAC)  
Faculty Workshop Program 2023**

**Proposed Workshop:** Carceral States: Prison Writing & Liberal Arts Education

**1. Concept and Logistics (up to 500 words): Description, Rationale, Intended Audience, Schedule, & Format**

Motivated in part by a hope to address the shocking events related to policing and incarceration we have witnessed in recent years, this proposed workshop aims to consider the role of prisons in the liberal arts curriculum, related research, and projects that blur the lines between academia and activism. We seek to support faculty at our institutions who are working toward an ever more robust, nuanced understanding of prison literature of various kinds and teaching of/in prisons. The powerful legacy of carceral regimes around the world, whether in democratic nations or authoritarian states, and their historical legacies of unjust detention, imprisonment, and exile offer the opportunity to consider how the past inflects more recent conflicts between the state and its citizens and immigrants.

Our proposed two-day workshop will consist of a series of panels and roundtables (2-3 per day). Some sessions will showcase new research on prison literature, including but not limited to fictional depictions of prisons/camps, autobiography, memoirs, and letters from various eras and traditions. Other sessions will address approaches to teaching prison literature in the college classroom, as well as teaching *in* prisons. Operating on the principle that prisons are institutions intricately tied to society despite their fortified walls obscuring what happens therein, this workshop seeks to illuminate an array of carceral states understood both as governmental biopolitical regimes of punishment and control and the experiences of captivity and coercion.

This intentionally broad, comparative approach will cultivate new lines of dialogue between traditions and areas of expertise. This approach seems apposite when considering how penal practices such as the American single-cell penitentiary or today's supermax prisons are, historically, traveling ideas. Naturally, the specifics of our research and pedagogies vary, but bringing faculty together will reveal, if not generate, dynamic resonances that may be harnessed in our classrooms and research. Likewise, given that our work often operates in these interlinked channels, pairing teaching and research is tremendously beneficial. At these sessions, we will discuss not only our work, but strategies for selecting and incorporating materials into our courses, developing productive comparative lenses for undergraduates, and expanding our field-specific expertise to improve learning outcomes. Similarly, because of the global nature of the prison problem, these exchanges bridging disciplines will grant us insights and lines of thought in research and teaching that might not otherwise take shape.

Beyond what we will take to our classrooms, we envision several other potential outcomes. First, we might easily organize additional sessions at our respective field-specific conferences to share these conversations with others. Second, we hope to use this workshop as the launchpad for an edited volume on teaching prison literature and teaching in prisons. Finally, we believe this opportunity to learn from colleagues actively engaged in prison education will be an enriching opportunity for everyone involved to consider other such possibilities that challenge what a

liberal arts education can involve. In this sense, our workshop serves as a continuation of the amazing work yielded by the prison-related 2013 and 2016 workshops.

## **2. Workshop Participants**

We aim to include fifteen participants, including the keynote speaker and the individuals listed below who have expressed interest and will help organize the workshop.

Bryn Mawr College has agreed to host this summer 2023 workshop and will provide meeting spaces. Located 25 minutes from Philadelphia and 30 minutes from the Philadelphia International Airport, Bryn Mawr offers easy access to transportation and accommodations.

Additional local faculty and staff have expressed interest in attending the workshop and participating in the general conversation but will not require funding.

## **3. Designated Workshop Liaison**

José Vergara, Bryn Mawr College, [jvergara@brynmawr.edu](mailto:jvergara@brynmawr.edu)