CJ 360: The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program
School of Criminal Justice

What is it?
The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program was originally founded in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in 1997, and is a transformative learning process that brings college students and incarcerated students together. The program emphasizes collaboration and dialogue between “inside” and “outside” students, encouraging them to take leadership in addressing crime, justice, and other relevant social issues. Since 2009, the School of Criminal Justice has been offering the Inside-Out Prison Exchange program to Criminal Justice majors and minors. GVSU’s course is one of about 300 Inside-Out courses happening each year in the United States and abroad.

In a nutshell:
The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at GVSU is an innovative course which brings Grand Valley students (“outside students”) inside a prison to have class with inmates (“inside students”). Each week, GVSU students travel to the Michigan Reformatory, a high-security facility in Ionia, Michigan for this unique, high-impact learning experience.

Can I take the course?
Since 2009, over 100 GVSU students have taken part in the program, which is only offered during the Fall semester. Given that only 15 students can take the course each year, entrance into the class is competitive. You cannot “add” the course on Banner, as students are required to complete an application, provide references, and undergo an interview and background check before they are eligible for the course. Watch for an email from Dr. Cwick in late January/early February with instructions on how to complete the application.

Keep in mind: Each class session consists of large and small group discussions and exercises which are designed to encourage critical thinking and dialogue. Participation in these discussions makes up 25% of your grade; if you don’t like talking in class, this program might not be for you.

What if I don’t have transportation?
Once students have been selected for the course, we organize carpool (so it’s ok if you don’t have a car).

What are the eligibility requirements?
1. Must have Junior or Senior Status by the semester of participation.
2. Must be a Criminal Justice Major or Minor.
3. Must be in good academic standing (strong preference given to students with a cumulative GPA of 2.8 or higher).
4. Must have completed pre-requisites (CJ 101 & CJ 201) by the semester of participation and CJ 330 before or during semester of participation.
5. Must be available on Tuesdays from about 12:00pm – 5:00pm (in order to allow travel to-and-from the facility).

Still have questions? Feel free to contact Dr. Cwick (cwickjac@gvsu.edu).