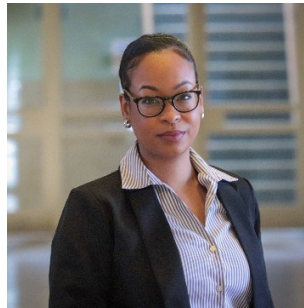


Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology

SPEAKER SERIES

A Retributivist's Defence of Prison Reform

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The main question that I seek to answer is whether prisons should be abolished in Canada and the United States. The answer I propose is that the prison systems in these countries must be reformed and alternative forms of accountability should be implemented but punishment in the form of incarceration should continue to play a role in holding people accountable for certain kinds of harms. My Black feminist defence of retributivism is Kantian in nature and grounded in the notion that the justice system, and society, must be reformed for incarceration to be fully justified. I argue in defence of “Six Pillars of Reform”: prison reform, legal reform, restorative justice, moral education, reparations and a basic minimum income.

To reach my conclusion, I consider, and reject, arguments provided against retributivism in philosophical and prison abolitionist literature. I also focus on the case of gender-based violence within Black communities to resist the notion that my position should count as a form of “carceral feminism,” a term used by prison abolitionists to describe the views of feminists who argue that incarceration should be used to address certain cases of gender-based violence. Carceral feminism is also associated within the feminist prison abolitionist literature with a white feminist tradition. I demonstrate through my Black feminist analysis of the testimonies of Black women survivors of gender-based violence that an intersectional, race-conscious approach can be taken to defending incarceration that should not count as “carceral feminist.”

Friday, March 14th, 2025
2:30 p.m in McCain, #1116
All Welcome!