

## Policing and Corrections

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### ***Race, Class, Gender, Incarceration & Re-Entry: Power, Privilege, and Marginalization in the US Criminal Justice System***

**Wednesday 4:15 pm; Panel 1**

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**Abstract:** Over the past several decades, this country has witnessed an evolution of policy changes that have contributed to rising incarceration rates for minority offenders. Specifically, the war on drugs in the late 1980s prompted legislators to formulate and pass laws and policies which resulted in a large proportion of minority offenders, especially women, being charged and sentenced on various drug related crimes. According to Tonry (2011) in 2003, 37.5 percent of black people committed to state prisons had been convicted of drug offenses. Furthermore, the changes in sentencing laws for drug related crimes have resulted in the increased incarceration among African American women. The categorization of controlled substances and the war on drugs have marginalized individuals along the lines of race, class, and gender as minorities and the low-income are disproportionately affected. The marginalization is perpetuated when individuals re-enter the community after serving time. With the high percentage of men and women being released from prison, research has found that many ex-offenders face new and difficult challenges when reintegrating into the community. Personal and social challenges present a systemic issue that is not only relevant to the successful reentry for the ex-offender, but to the community at large. This panel will critically examine the costs of incarceration at the individual, the family, and the societal levels and will propose policy and practice prescriptions that correct the power asymmetries that perpetuate disparities in the US Criminal Justice System.