

What I'm Reading in Spring 2015

The Modern Prison Paradox: Politics, Punishment, and Social Community, by Amy Lerman

In *The Modern Prison Paradox*, Amy E. Lerman examines the shift from rehabilitation to punitivism that has taken place in the politics and practice of American corrections. She argues that this punitive turn has had profoundly negative consequences for both crime control and American community life. Professor Lerman's research shows that spending time in America's increasingly violent and castigatory prisons strengthens inmates' criminal networks and fosters attitudes that increase the likelihood of criminal activity following parole.

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Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces, by Rodney Balko

In *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, Balko shows how politicians' ill-considered policies and relentless declarations of war against vague enemies like crime, drugs, and terror have blurred the distinction between cop and soldier. His fascinating, frightening narrative shows how over a generation, a creeping battlefield mentality has isolated and alienated American police officers and put them on a collision course with the values of a free society.

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El Narco: Inside Mexico's Criminal Insurgency, by Ioan Grillo

The world has watched, stunned, the bloodshed in Mexico. Forty thousand murdered since 2006; police chiefs shot within hours of taking office; mass graves comparable to those of civil wars; car bombs shattering storefronts; headless corpses heaped in town squares. And it is all because a few Americans are getting high. Or is it part of a worldwide shadow economy that threatens Mexico's democracy? The United States throws Black Hawk helicopters, DEA assistance, and lots of money at the problem. But in secret, Washington is at a loss. Who are these mysterious figures who threaten Mexico's democracy? What is El Narco?

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Punishment and Inequality in America, by Bruce Western

Over the last thirty years, the prison population in the United States has increased more than sevenfold to over two million people, including vastly disproportionate numbers of minorities and people with little education. For some racial and educational groups, incarceration has become a depressingly regular experience, and prison culture and influence pervade their communities. Almost 60 percent of black male high school drop-outs in their early thirties have spent time in prison. In *Punishment and Inequality in America*, sociologist Bruce Western explores the recent era of mass incarceration and the serious social and economic consequences it has wrought.

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No Place to Hide: Edward Snowden, the NSA, and the U.S. Surveillance State

In May 2013, Glenn Greenwald set out for Hong Kong to meet an anonymous source who claimed to have astonishing evidence of pervasive government spying and insisted on communicating only through heavily encrypted channels. That source turned out to be the 29-year-old NSA contractor and whistleblower Edward Snowden, and his revelations about the agency's widespread, systemic overreach proved to be some of the most explosive and consequential news in recent history, triggering a fierce debate over national security and information privacy. As the arguments rage on and the government considers various proposals for reform, it is clear that we have yet to see the full impact of Snowden's disclosures.

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