

## Part 1: ABSTRACT

2005-2006 Wisconsin Teaching Fellow Project  
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My project assesses the impact of a community education/service learning project on student learning. In particular, the study asks the following research question: How do students process experiences or situations that may challenge their ways of thinking? I designed one of my Communication/Women's Studies cross-listed courses, "Gender, Discourse, and Power," around a community education/service learning project with the John Burke Correctional Center (JBCC) in Waupun. The course focused on women and incarceration and two discussion sessions were held at the JBCC with ten prisoners. I was allowed to bring half the class (12 students) to the JBCC for each discussion session. All students participated in one discussion session and three students were allowed to participate twice upon their request. Students then processed the experience through various writing assignments, including five critical reflections, a discourse analysis paper, and a final project. After the semester ended, I decided to focus my project on two particular writing assignments: 1) the first critical reflection in which students were asked to describe what they believed to be the characteristics of women in prison and why they were there, and 2) the final critical reflection in which students were asked to revisit the first reflection and write about their initial assumptions. After learning about women in prison, what, if anything, would they change about their initial responses and why? Sixteen students agreed to participate in the study and I am currently analyzing their two writing reflections from the course. The analysis is qualitative; I am assessing the language choices, metaphors and clusters of words that students have used to process their experiences at the JBCC.