

## COURSE SYLLABUS

---

# Dynamics of Working with Offenders

Course Lecturer: Karen Swanson, EdD

Director of the Institute for Prison Ministries (IPM), Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College

### Course Description

---

Welcome to *Dynamics of Working with Offenders*, an online undergraduate-level course designed to help you understand the corrections environment, people and culture. This course will examine the common characteristics of offenders, the specialized approaches to ministering within a correctional facility, and the biblical corollaries for transformation as they pertain to offenders. Special attention will be given to the psycho-sociological factors that contribute to criminality, as well as to ways institutional conditions damage family structures, add to the pains of incarceration, and impair successful reentry. Students will examine possible solutions for overcoming these deficits and helping inmates prepare for a return to their communities.

### Course Objectives

---

Upon completion of the course, you should be able to do the following:

- Describe inmate profiles and explain both their usefulness and limitations.
- Assess the variables within the psychological make-up and sociological backgrounds of offenders and how the Gospel can best be used to intervene in these behavioral patterns.
- Identify the “pains of imprisonment” that exacerbate healing and behavioral change.
- Develop biblically based strategies that can positively impact offenders.
- Describe the unique characteristics of a variety of offenders and propose compassionate ministry approaches.
- Identify the various attitudes and behaviors exhibited by inmates that comprise the unique correctional culture.
- Research an approved topic in special populations or criminology.

## Course Lecturer

---



*Karen Swanson, EdD*

**Education:**

- Northern Illinois University, EdD
- Western Michigan University, MA
- Calvin College, BS
- Cornerstone University, BA

**Teaching Career:**

- Professor of Correctional Ministries, Christian University GlobalNet
- Faculty member, Christian Formation and Ministry Department, Wheaton College

**Other Career Highlights:**

- Director of the Institute for Prison Ministries (IPM), Billy Graham Center for Evangelism at Wheaton College
- Overseer of Charles W. Colson scholarship program at IPM
- Christian Association for Prisoner Aftercare Advisory Board
- Developer, Correctional Ministries courses at Wheaton College and Christian University GlobalNet
- Executive director, LifeHouse Ministries reentry program
- Certified in Justice Ministries, Motivational Interviewing, Moral Reconciliation Therapy, Bridges Out of Poverty, Truthought, and Anger Management
- Volunteer teacher in Life Learning Program, Cook County Jail (Chicago, IL)

## Course Contributors

---

Guest lecturer: Richard Barnhart



*Richard Barnhart*

**Education:**

- University of Utah, MSW
- Utah State University, BS

**Career Highlights:**

- Executive Director, Correctional Ministries and Chaplains Association (CMCA)
- Program Specialist, National Institute of Corrections (7 years)
- Deputy Warden, Oklahoma Department of Corrections (5 years)
- Work in probation and in institutions for Utah Department of Corrections (12 years)
- Instructor for criminal justice and management classes, University of Wyoming
- Officer, U.S. Navy
- U.S. Navy Reserve

## Recommended Reading

---

Though not required, you may choose to read the textbooks shown below to supplement your learning.

Corbett, S. & Fikkert, B. (2014). *When helping hurts: How to alleviate poverty without hurting the poor... and yourself*. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Sharp, B. (2006). *Changing criminal thinking: A treatment program*. Alexandria, VA: American Correctional Association.

Spinaris, C. (2008). *Staying well: Strategies for corrections staff*. (Available at [www.desertwaters.com](http://www.desertwaters.com))

Spitale, L. (2002). *Prison ministry: Understanding prison culture inside and out*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Spitale, L. *Sentenced*. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House.

## Course Methods

---

Throughout this course, a number of methods will be used to engage you in understanding, processing and applying the information learned in this course to your life. These methods include the following:

- **Video-based teaching**  
The primary teaching session in each lesson is provided in video format. If you do not have the bandwidth required to view the video, we provide the option of listening to the lesson or reading the lesson from a transcript.
- **Additional Resources**  
Lessons may be accompanied by additional readings, images, etc. that you can use to supplement your learning.

## Course Requirements

---

To earn a Certificate of Completion, you must complete the course requirements. Course requirements include:

1. Viewing the following for each lesson:
  - **Lesson Overview:** A brief outline of what the lecturer will cover in the lesson.
  - **Lesson Objectives:** Objectives describe the learning outcomes you should achieve by the end of the lesson.
  - **Reading:** Suggested readings that will supplement your learning.
  - **Lectures:** 25 minute lessons that can be viewed as many times as needed.
2. Responding to the discussion questions for each lesson.

3. Earning a 70% or higher score on each lesson Quiz and the Midterm and Final Exams. Quizzes and the Exams will cover the material presented in the lectures.