

CAL Undergraduate Research Scholarships Scheme 2017
Project Proposal Form

Project Proposer/s:	Matt Houlbrook and Dominique Moran
School/Dept:	SHAC / History and SEES / Geography
Project Title:	Prisons and War
Project Summary	
<p>There is a perplexing paradox in the relationship between conflict and the reform of prison systems. Whereas early 20th Century war appears to have catalysed lasting prison reform, in contemporary post-conflict settings this effect rarely occurs. This interdisciplinary project aims to question whether World Wars I&II catalysed prison reform, and if so, how and why this happened. Focusing on the UK (1914-50), it intends to better understand this under-researched aspect of the penal past. Although WWI&II are not typical of contemporary war events, and conclusions may be culturally-specific, unless we know more about the relationship between conflict and reform, we are unable to learn any lessons from it.</p> <p>Prison reform has followed conflict in terms both of international laws and standards, and reform of national prison systems. But whilst much is known about post-WWII international humanitarian human rights law (e.g. 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, affirmed in the UK Criminal Justice Act 1948), research has overlooked the operation of 'ordinary' prisons during WWI&II, tending to focus either on the 17th/18thC 'birth' of the prison, or its 1960s/70s politicisation.</p> <p>In the UK, both Wars significantly impacted the prison system, with the interwar period seeing unprecedented decarceration. Conscientious objectors imprisoned during WWI published recollections damning the prison system and initiating a wave of reform with effects felt for decades. And less than a year into WWII, Prisons Commissioner Paterson hoped for reforms: 'as a result of some of the experiments we are compelled to make in wartime...'</p>	
What the researcher will do	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcribe the Governor's Journal for HMP Birmingham 1939-1944, held at Birmingham Library and Archive 2. Complete an initial scoping survey of the archives of the Penal Reform League (from 1921 The Howard League for Penal Reform) held at the Modern Records Centre, at the University of Warwick. 3. Complete an initial scoping survey of relevant material in local archives (depending on the researcher's location during the project) - subject to agreement with the project proposers. 	
Skills required by the Scholarship holder	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Although an interest in criminal justice and incarceration is ideal, no specific knowledge of the operation or management of prisons is required – this will be gained through the project itself and through briefings from the proposers. 2. A diligent approach to data generation, and, since this project may include consultation of records ordinarily closed according to the 70 year rule, opened specifically for this project, an undertaking to abide by the conditions of use of those records (in line with ethical research practices and procedures). 3. Independent research skills, including time management, organisation, and the ability to manage complex and extensive qualitative and quantitative data. 	
How will your Project benefit the Scholarship holder?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It will provide them with sustained experience of working in diverse archives and libraries, and of primary research on a broad range of types of published and archival material, relevant to their own work at Level 3. 2. It will provide experience of conducting and completing an independent research project, time management, and the handling of large amounts of material — key transferrable skills for humanities undergraduates and invaluable for anyone interested in postgraduate study in history, art history, English, or related disciplines. 3. It will provide them with experience of working in a multidisciplinary research team as part of a collaborative project between SHAC and SEES, and familiarise them with debates about interdisciplinarity and the relationship between historical, geographical, and criminological approaches and methods. 	
How will the Scholarship benefit your Project?	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This preliminary work in previously unused archives will provide the core case study for a co-authored article on prison reform between the Great War and the late-1940s. We will submit this to the <i>Journal of British Studies</i> (the leading interdisciplinary journal in the field) in spring 2018. 2. This research in local archives and the MRC is intended to be an initial scoping exercise for a larger collaborative research project exploring the relationship between war and prison, and prison reform in the post-conflict context. 	