

Political Orientation Syllabus

Political orientation sessions will take place once a week on Thursdays with a rotating Reading Syllabus. The first session is about the politics of Abolition. The second session is about the practice of Abolition. There is no particular order for this so community members may join political orientation sessions during any week. This syllabus is subject to change.

Thursdays, 5:30-7:00 pm, every week

Readings:

1. All readings will be available online and linked on this document. Simply click on the reading for the link. If you have trouble accessing please contact smyouthabolitionist@gmail.com.

Community Guidelines:

1. Arrive on Time with note taking materials and readings if possible.
2. If you're confused, ask for more information or clarification.
3. Challenge ideas, not people – specify what you're trying to challenge and don't put others down.
4. Don't be the spotlight of discussions—step up to add to the discussion; step back to give space to other voices and build your active listening skills.
5. Don't assume you know where someone else is coming from in their perspectives or comments. Instead of assuming, *ask*. (If you don't ask, you often miss an opportunity to learn!)
6. If speaking from your own experience, don't generalize—and don't assume that your way of thinking about your experience is the only way to think about it.
7. Take responsibility for the quality of discussion—your silence and your speech are both part of the overall texture of the group

Session 1: Abolition: A Political Project

What is abolition? Why abolition and not reform? What is possible in the wake of abolition?

[Mariame Kaba and Flynn Nicholls. Who's Left?: Prison Abolition. 2017](#)

- Key Words: Abolition, harm, questions,
- Guiding Questions:
 - What kind of questions does Kaba encourage us to ask? Which ones does she avoid and why?
 - What is the web that Kaba refers to? What are some ways you are caught in that web? What are some ways you uphold that web?
 - What will prison abolition transform?

[INCITE! WOMEN OF COLOR AGAINST VIOLENCE AND CRITICAL RESISTANCE: STATEMENT ON GENDER VIOLENCE AND THE PRISON INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX. 2008.](#)

- Key words: Gender Violence, Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC), Anti-violence, anti-prison, shortcomings.
- Guiding Questions:
 - What are some of the shortcomings the see of recent anti-prison and anti-violent movements? What has come about because of these shortcomings?
 - What are some of their suggestions for addressing these shortcomings? What do they call on other organizations to do in their work?

Session 2: Abolition: A Way of Life

[Mariame Kaba: Everything worthwhile is done with other people. Mariame Kaba and Eve E. Ewing in conversation. Fall 2019.](#)

- Key words: collectivity, individualism, relationships, harm, internationalist, Hope.
- Guiding Questions:

- What units is Kaba interested in and why are these units important?
- What is the difference between activism and organizing? Why is this distinction important?
- What narrative have people of color internalized, according to Ewing? Why is this dangerous?

[Rotating local piece]: Every session there will be a new local news piece to connect the project of abolition to what is happening in our own community.

Date: 11.5.20

