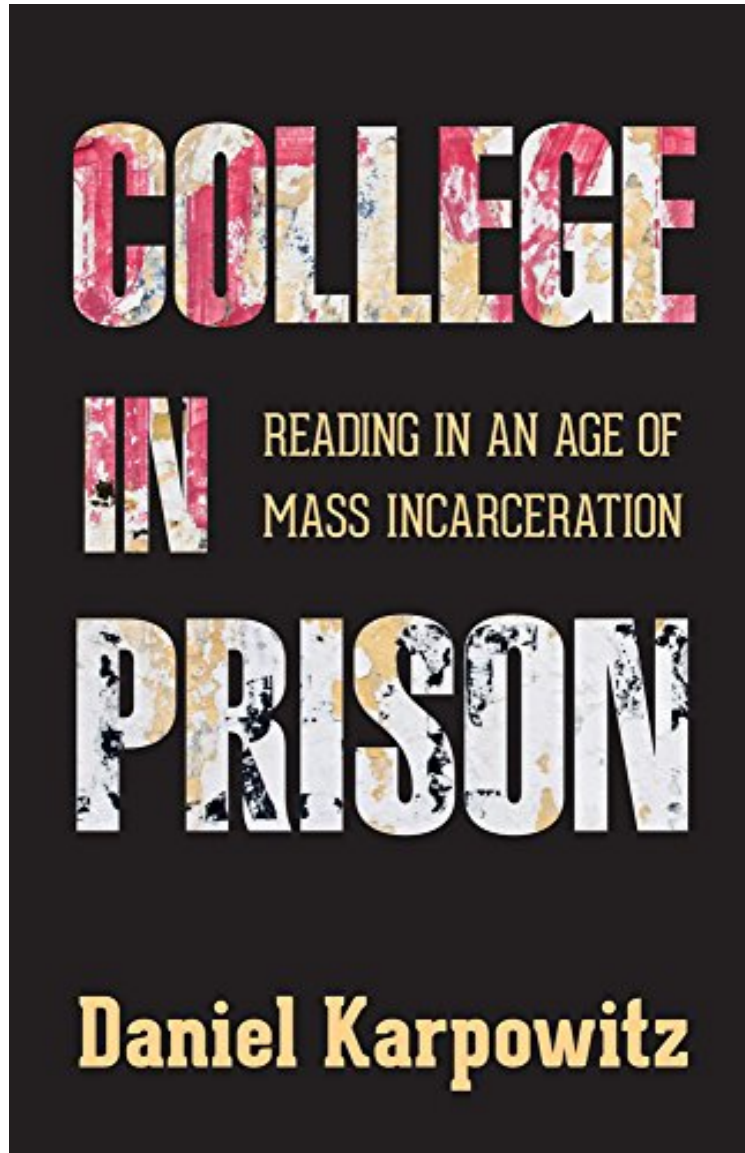


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College in Prison: Reading in an Age of Mass Incarceration

Daniel Karpowitz

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Over the years, American colleges and universities have made various efforts to provide prisoners with access to education. However, few of these outreach programs presume that incarcerated men and women can rise to the challenge of a truly rigorous college curriculum. The Bard Prison Initiative is different. College in Prison chronicles how, since 2001, Bard College has provided hundreds of incarcerated men and women across the country access to a high-quality liberal arts education. Earning degrees in subjects ranging from Mandarin to advanced mathematics, graduates have, upon release, gone on to rewarding careers and elite graduate and professional programs. Yet this is more than just a story of exceptional individuals triumphing against the odds. It is a study in how the liberal arts can alter the landscape of some of our most important public institutions giving people from all walks of life a chance to enrich their minds and expand their opportunities. Drawing on fifteen years of experience as a director of and teacher within the Bard Prison Initiative, Daniel Karpowitz tells the story of BPI's development from a small pilot project to a nationwide network. At the same time, he recounts dramatic scenes from in and around college-in-prison classrooms pinpointing the contested meanings that emerge in moments of highly-charged reading, writing, and public speaking. Through examining the transformative encounter between two characteristically American institutions—the undergraduate college and the modern penitentiary—College in Prison makes a powerful case for why liberal arts education is still vital to the future of democracy in the United States.

"Makes a convincing 'case for college in prison' ... carefully documenting the great many benefits that its graduates receive.... At the same time, remind[s] us how far our higher-education system has strayed from the humanistic ideals at the heart of the Bard prison project."