

# Teaching for Odyssey Beyond Bars

## Our classes

Odyssey Beyond Bars (OBB) offers college jumpstart courses to students in prison who are interested in college but not yet enrolled in a degree program. Our core offering is English 100, Introduction to College Composition, a three-credit UW-Madison course we've offered at Oakhill since 2019 and will begin teaching at other prisons in Spring 2022. We occasionally teach other courses that provide exciting introductions to college-level coursework. Each class typically has about 15 students.

## Delivery mode

We teach face-to-face when possible, or via Zoom when face-to-face instruction is impossible. We also use a Canvas-like learning management system to facilitate course delivery and instructor-student communication.



## Wraparound support for students

We invest in student success and encourage our students to build and pursue long-term academic goals. To complement our engaging classroom instruction, we offer students individualized tutoring and academic and financial aid advising. Almost all of our students have stated that their experience in OBB has made them want to take more college classes. We continue offering academic advice to our program graduates after they are released as part of our alumni support program, Onward Odyssey.

## Training and support for instructors

Each instructor must complete a training program through OBB and a training session through the Department of Corrections (DOC). OBB offers ongoing support to instructors throughout the course and can help provide tutors, advising, and any required course components. We are normally able to offer instructors an honorarium or other compensation.

## Applying to teach

If you are interested in teaching for OBB, please complete this [form](#). Thanks for your interest!

## Frequently Asked Questions:

### **I haven't taught in prison before. Can I apply to be an OBB instructor?**

Yes. We will provide orientation and support throughout your time teaching with OBB. We do encourage you to familiarize yourself with prison culture, the UW Odyssey Project, Odyssey Beyond Bars, and pedagogies for students affected by trauma. We will provide some resources on these topics.

### **What procedures are required before I am able to teach in prison?**

You will have to complete a short training program with OBB. Additionally, the Dept. of Corrections will ask you to complete a background check and orientation before you are permitted to enter the prisons as a teacher. OBB will assist in coordinating these procedures. As a general rule, when teaching in prison, all course materials must be submitted to the Dept. of Corrections in advance for approval.

### **What resources will my students have access to?**

Students in prison typically have access to classrooms for in-person class sessions and some access to computers and libraries housed in the prison. We also provide tutors and organize tutoring sessions for students. Students will have *no access* to the internet, though they may have access to a learning management system, depending on the capacities of the individual prisons. Instructors should provide paper copies of all course materials. You will have to be flexible, patient, and supportive as the prison environment can be unpredictable for both students and instructors.

### **What are instructors' responsibilities during the semester?**

Teaching responsibilities are similar to what they are on campus. Apart from delivering classroom instruction, you will be expected to communicate with tutors, provide feedback on assignments, keep track of students' progress, and reply to student messages sent to you through our learning management system. Instructional quality should mirror what you would offer to a student on campus. Instructors must also comply with all prison rules.

### **How will I send and receive students' work?**

In most cases, you will have access to a Learning Management System (LMS) that students can use to submit assignments and communicate with instructors, and that instructors can use to grade student work. There may be times when the instructor will have to use paper assignments and feedback, exchanged during class. This may be necessary if the LMS is unavailable for any reason, or if a particular student struggles with technology or typing.

### **What is the course schedule?**

The course schedule follows the [UW-Madison academic calendar](#). Classes typically meet once per week in the prisons. Individual class schedules are dependent on the capacities of the prison and will be coordinated among the instructor, the OBB program manager, and the educational director of the prison.

### **What does compensation look like?**

Compensation varies depending on available resources and the employment status of the instructor. It may take the form of an honorarium, course buy-out or a separate appointment. Sometimes, OBB shares the cost of compensation with the instructor's academic department. OBB instructor compensation is funded primarily through private donations.

### **Where will classes take place?**

Classes will take place in-person in state prisons in Wisconsin. We are currently offering classes in Oakhill Correctional Institution and working towards expanding our program to Green Bay Correctional, Columbia Correctional, Racine Correctional, and other state prisons across Wisconsin.