

History of Corrections

History of Corrections – Study Notes

1. Overview

- **Corrections** = the system of punishment, rehabilitation, and supervision of individuals convicted of crimes.
 - Evolution reflects changing social attitudes, political forces, scientific ideas, and economic conditions.
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2. Early Forms of Punishment (Pre-Modern Era)

Period / Region	Main Practices	Rationale
Ancient Mesopotamia (c. 2100?BC)	Fines, corporal punishment, exile, death	Retribution & restitution to the victim's family
Classical Greece & Rome	Slavery, forced labor, public execution, exile	Deterrence, civic order, and use of prisoners as economic resources
Medieval Europe	Public whippings, stocks, pillory, branding, imprisonment in castles or monasteries	Moral correction, public shaming, and containment of "heretics" or political dissenters
Islamic Caliphates (7th–13th?c.)	Imprisonment for debt, theft, and political crimes; corporal punishment	Combination of retributive justice and moral reform

Key point: Imprisonment was rare; most penalties were corporal, capital, or aimed at restitution.

3. The Birth of the Modern Prison (17th–19th?Centuries)

3.1. English Foundations

- **1601** – Hale's *"The History of the Pleas of the Crown"* advocates confinement as a means of reform.

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- **1660s–1700s** – “House of Correction” (e.g., Bridewell) used for petty offenders; combined work, discipline, and moral instruction.
- **1776** – *John Howard’s* “The State of the Prisons” exposes horrendous conditions, spurring reform movements.

3.2. Penitentiary Models

Model	Country	Core Features	Influence
Pennsylvania System	USA (Philadelphia)	Solitary confinement, silent labor, emphasis on reflection (“penitence”)	Inspired the Eastern State Penitentiary; later critiqued for mental health effects
Auburn System	USA (New York)	Silent congregate work by day, solitary at night; “silent system”	Became the dominant U.S. model in the 19th?c.; spread to Canada & parts of Europe
Separate System (UK)	England (e.g., Pentonville)	Strict solitary, religious instruction, limited contact	Basis for many Victorian?era prisons

3.3. Legislative Milestones

- **1800s (UK)** – Prison Acts (e.g., 1865 Prison Act) standardize classification, introduce “separate” and “silent” regimes.
- **1844 (USA)** – *Prison Discipline Act* formalizes the Auburn system.

4. Progressive Era Reforms (Late 19th – Early 20th? Centuries)

Reform Idea	Proponents	Implementation
Rehabilitation	<i>Eugenics movement, social scientists</i> (e.g., Cesare Lombroso)	Classification of inmates, “treatment” programs
Indeterminate Sentencing	<i>John B. Little</i> (NY)	“Open?ended” sentences tied to progress reports
Probation & Parole	<i>John Augustus</i> (1841) – first probation officer; <i>Alexander Maconochie</i> – parole concepts	Institutionalized in U.S. (probation 1925, parole