



JOHN JAY COLLEGE  
THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
*Educating for Justice*

*The Department of* **Sociology**

*Cordially invites everyone to our*  
SPRING 2009 COLLOQUIUM SERIES

## **Experimenting with Education in Juvenile Prisons: The Jewish Museum Berlin Visits the Juvenile Penitentiary Berlin**

**Wednesday, March 4, 2009 at 3:00pm**  
**Sociology Department, Room 520.14**

The staff of the Jewish Museum Berlin visited the juvenile penitentiary in Berlin. It is the biggest correctional institution of its kind in Germany. The number of inmates amounts to about 500 young men in the age of 14 to 24 years. Many of the convicted offenders are of Arab, Turkish, and Eastern European origin. For one week between 5 and 8 museum guides were present in the prison giving tours through a mobile exhibition and holding workshops, reaching about 100 inmates.

The idea for the contact was met with great concern by the prison staff. Among them skepticism prevailed that such a visit would be advisable. As they suspected, the inmates would behave improperly, they would not be interested in a museum, and worst of all, they would express anti-Semitism. Because of the Nazi history, anti-Semitism is a taboo issue in Germany. This trauma burdens communication about Jewish topics and furthermore tends to reproduce itself.

This was the anticipation of the students, their teachers, and the museum guides during the extensive preparations of the encounter. Initially there was mistrust by guides and inmates that respectful, frank discussion could be possible. Notwithstanding their initial fears guides and inmates cooperated smoothly. They engaged in frank discussions rather than hostile confrontation and their initial fears were proved wrong.

**Maja Lenhardt, born in 1974, Diplom-sociologist, has been teaching at the juvenile penitentiary, Jugendstrafanstalt Berlin, since 2002. In addition, she has been working as an online editor at the Jewish Museum Berlin since 2006. In 2004 she worked as an external collaborator for the International Labor Organization of the UN in Geneva.**