

Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the United States and Canada
(third edition)

by Jon Marc Taylor and Susan Schwartzkopf

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Reviewed by Paul Wright

In 1994, the Democratic Congress and President Clinton eliminated Pell Grants for prisoners. Within the next few years, most states followed suit and either totally eliminated or gutted their prison education programs. Prison and jail education programs beyond General Equivalency Diplomas (GED) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) became, and remain, a rarity. Of course, prisoner illiteracy rates remain sky high. All that changed is that prisoners seeking a higher education can no longer seek one within the prison system. The other alternative is correspondence courses. While there are books on the market discussing correspondence courses, they are all aimed at non-prisoners, virtually all of which require some degree of internet access.

Prisoners' Guerrilla Handbook to Correspondence Programs in the United States and Canada (third edition) (PGHCP) is written by Missouri prisoner Jon Marc Taylor who has successfully completed a B.S. degree, an M.A. degree and a Doctorate by mail while imprisoned. This book was initially published in the late 1990s. The second edition was published by Biddle Publishing in 2002. The publisher retired in 2007 and Prison Legal News took over the publishing of the book as the first title in its new book line.

With the expert assistance of Editor Susan Schwartzkopf, the third edition of PGHCP has been totally revamped and updated. Many colleges no longer offer correspondence courses, having gone totally to online distance learning courses. This book offers a complete description of more than one hundred and sixty programs that are ideal for prisoners seeking to earn high school diplomas, associate, baccalaureate and graduate degrees, and also vocational and paralegal certificates. In addition to giving contact information for each school, Taylor includes tuition rates, text book costs, courses offered, transfer credits, time limits for completing course, whether the school is accredited, and if so by whom, and much, much more. What makes the book unique is Taylor's first hand personal experience as an imprisoned distance learning student who has a basis for comparison and knows how to judge a college correspondence course from the perspective of an imprisoned student who does not have e-mail access or who cannot readily call his instructor.

Book editor Susan Schwartzkopf brings a masters degree in education and twelve years of experience teaching immigrants English language skills to the project. The introduction by Vivian Nixon, the executive director of the College and Community Fellowship which advocates for the inclusion of released prisoners in higher education, further bolsters the masterful expertise and experience brought together in this book.

Taylor also explains factors to be considered in selecting an educational program and how to make meaningful comparisons between the courses offered for the tuition charged. No money to pay for school? Taylor covers that too. Diploma mills? The book addresses how to recognize and avoid them. Any prisoner seeking to begin or continue their education behind bars will find this to be an invaluable road map. This is not just the only book on the market to address the needs of prisoners seeking a higher education while locked up – it does a fantastic job accomplishing its goal. It saves the prospective student countless money and time researching the best course for their needs. Cost is \$49.95, free shipping. Contact:

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ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Paul Wright is the editor and founder of *Prison Legal News*. He was imprisoned in the Washington state prison system from 1987 to 2003. He is the co-editor of *The Ceiling of America: An Inside Look at the US Prison Industry* (1998), *Prison Nation: the Warehousing of Americas Poor* (2002) and *Prison Profiteers: Who Makes Money from Mass Incarceration* (2007). His articles have appeared in dozens of publications over the past 20 years, including the *Journal of Prisoners on Prisons*.