Inside-Out is a prison-based post-secondary credit course that brings together incarcerated students (inside learners) and traditional university students (outside learners) who study together as peers with the recognition that both will benefit, and each has innate worth and a story to tell. Improved self-understanding and validation as peers with outside students can help inside students reintegrate with society upon release, including inspiring them to seek life-changing post-secondary education. Traditional students are exposed to a powerful learning experience with the potential to shift their attitudes, leading to a better understanding of the factors that bring an individual into contact with the criminal justice system and shaping the way they approach potential employment within it.

This program was founded in the US and adapted to the Canadian context. The core of the program is a semester-long, seminar-format academic course taught using a circle pedagogy and collaborative dialogue. The class will be limited to 30 students: 15 outside learners and 15 inside learners. The classroom time will be spent predominately in "circle" and participatory exercises, and written assignments will involve self-reflection. Students who take this class must be open to new experiences and ways of learning and prepared to challenge themselves intellectually and emotionally.

As a result of this program, former inside students are now thriving in the community, and there are many success stories of sobriety maintained, family connections restored, success in further education and stable, meaningful employment achieved. Inside-Out is in high demand by outside students: the rich experience it provides has inspired several to change direction to pursue careers that will allow them to more directly make a positive difference in the correctional system.

Inside-Out courses have been running at the Nanaimo Correctional Centre since 2016. A grant from the Vancouver Foundation is helping this program to expand to the Vancouver Island Regional Correctional Centre in Victoria and to include students studying in all other departments at VIU. The Criminology department offers two distinct Inside-Out courses via their Selected Topics courses:

CRIM 299: Exploring Issues of Crime and Justice Behind the Walls (Prerequisite: 30 credits completed)
CRIM 499: From Social Exclusion to Social Inclusion (Prerequisite: 60 credits completed)

Interested students are asked to submit an application to the course instructors. The application is available via the Criminology webpage. Short-listed students will be interviewed and successful students will be enrolled by the course instructors. Security clearances will need to be completed immediately following acceptance into the course. Find us @ https://socialsciences.viu.ca/criminology

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