

Straits Times - New York prison set to instil Ivy League classes

NEW YORK - This spring, Homer, Euripides and Virgil are all doing weekly stints at a New York women's prison.

Their classic works are being read by inmates enrolled in a Columbia University course organized by the non-profit Hudson Link for Higher Education in Prison.

The class aims to boost employment for convicts upon release and reduce recidivism.

According to the US Department of Justice, about half of the 700,000 inmates who leave US federal and state prisons each year in the world's biggest penal system will be re-incarcerated within three years.

But those who have taken classes offered by a consortium of colleges through Hudson Link over 16 years have a recidivism rate of less than 2 percent. The difference is evident even in the infamous Sing Sing penitentiary.