

Thinking with Foucault: Neoliberalism and Beyond

Syllabus

1st semester 2020/21, block 1
MA Political and Social Philosophy

Online-Course (zoom-link on Canvas)

ECTS: 6

Professor: dr. Daniel Loick

Email: d.loick@uva.nl

Time: Thursdays, 12-15 h

First session September 11th, last session October 16th

Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you will have

- received an in-depth introduction to some of Michel Foucault's main concepts,
- improved your ability to critically apply these concepts in order to analyze recent social and political developments,
- improved your analytical and hermeneutical skills.

Content

In this course, we will read (some main excerpts of) the mid and later work of Michel Foucault, as well as more recent applications and advancements of Foucault's concepts. The course revolves around five key themes: discipline, governmentality, biopolitics, neoliberalism, and care of the self. These ideas are put to use in a wide array of academic disciplines today as well as in social and political activism. We will familiarize ourselves not only with their significance within Foucault's overall oeuvre, but also with their development in a number of different contexts, such as abolitionism, postoperaism, queer theory, and postcolonial theory. While Foucault's ideas have proven to be extraordinarily productive, we will also discuss their limitations and shortcomings.

Format

Due to the corona-crisis, this course will be an online course. The zoom link will be in the canvas course page. The seminar has the following structure: 1. Introduction by the teacher (45-60 min), 2. Group discussion in breakout rooms, led by student experts (see below) (45-60 min), 3. Break (15 min), 4. general class discussion (45-60 min).

It is absolutely essential to read the assigned texts thoroughly. The texts will be made available through Canvas.

Examen

In order to successfully complete this course, you have to:

- attend class regularly and well prepared,
- actively participate in class discussion,

- be an “expert” for one of the 6 sessions. Experts prepare for the particular session especially thoroughly and moderate the sessions in the breakout rooms (there will be multiple experts for each session, one in each breakout room). Please send me an email for which session you would like to be an expert.
- Write a final paper (about 3000-4000 words). Deadline for submission of the paper (via email) is 6.11.2020. The final grade of the class will be based solely on the paper.
- Please take notice of UvA’s regulations on plagiarism and fraud.

Class climate

Creating a respectful, inclusive and attentive atmosphere in the (virtual) classroom is the shared responsibility of teacher and students. This includes reflecting on the different backgrounds, experiences and social positionings among the participants, a sensibility with regard to one’s own conduct in the classroom, and an openness towards other perspectives and opinions. The seminar aims at including all students and thus attempts to reduce structural disadvantages. Please contact me with any discomfort with regard to the class climate.

The corona-situation poses extraordinary challenges to teachers and students alike (health problems, care obligations, financial problems, access to university facilities, etc.). It cannot be expected to carry out “regular” education under these circumstances. Please let me know if you have special needs or problems with the online teaching situation. We will try to work out a solution together.

Program

11.9. *Discipline*

1. Michel Foucault, “Panopticism”, in *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison*, pp. 195-228
2. Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies”, in *Negotiations*, pp. 177-182
3. Angela Davis, “Racialized Punishment and Prison Abolition”, in Tommy Lott, John Pittman (eds), *A Companion to African-American Philosophy*, pp. 360-368

18.9. *Governmentality*

1. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, ch. 4, pp. 87-114
2. Peter Miller, Nikolas Rose, “Governing Economic Life”, in *Governing the Present*, pp. 26-52
3. Sandro Mezzadra, Brett Neilson, “The Sovereign Machine of Governmentality”, in *Border as Method, or, The Multiplication of Labor*, pp. 167-204

25.9. *Biopolitics I*

1. Michel Foucault, “Right of Death and Power over Life”, in *The History of Sexuality*, pp. 133-160
2. Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, “Biopolitical Production”, in *Empire. The New World Order*, pp. 20-41
3. Paul B. Preciado, “History of Technosexuality”, in *Testo Junkie. Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, pp. 68-81

2.10. Biopolitics II

1. Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, ch. 11, pp. 239-264
2. Giorgio Agamben, "The Camp as Biopolitical Paradigm of Modernity", §§ 1-4, in *Homo Sacer. Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, pp. 119-153
3. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics", in *Society of Enmity*, pp. 66-92

9.10. Neoliberalism

1. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, ch. 9 + 11, pp. 215-237 + 267-289
2. Wendy Brown, "Foucault's *Birth of Biopolitics* Lectures", in *Undoing the Demos. Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*, pp. 47-78
3. Geoffroy de Lagasnerie, "Introduction" + "*Homo Economicus*, Psychology and the Disciplinary Society", in *Foucault Against Neoliberalism?*, pp. xxv-xxviii, 75-86

16.10. Care for Self

1. Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life", "On the Genealogy of Ethics", "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom", in *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth* (ed. Paul Rabinow), pp. 135-140, 253-280, 281-302
2. Didier Eribon, "Becoming Gay", "Among Men", "Making Differences", in *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, pp. 319-338
3. Sara Ahmed, "Selfcare as Warfare", *feminist killjoy* blog, online: <https://feministkilljoys.com/2014/08/25/selfcare-as-warfare/>