Foucault:
Discourse, Power, and Cares of the Self

Course IDSEM-UG 1339    Fall 2014
194 Mercer # 201     Tues 3:30-6:10
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Office hours (please schedule in advance):
   Tues (2:00 to 3:30), Thursday (2:00 to 3:30), and Friday (1:00 to 3:00)

Course Overview

French philosopher and cultural historian Michel Foucault’s innovative approach to knowledge and power created a new form of cultural study and bio-politics that has been broadly influential across the academy (in humanities, cultural studies, queer theory) and political activism (particularly ACT-UP and post-anarchy).

His later approach to “cares of the self” reorients his thinking about philosophy toward its roots as a way of life, a spiritual exercise, and a practice of freedom. This work has opened up new ways of thinking about ancient philosophy, religious studies, spiritual practices, and the arts and humanities.

In view of Foucault’s wide influence across a variety of domains, we devote this class to close readings of his work and key concepts. Our readings are roughly chronological and are organized around the three themes that are central to Foucault’s work: discourse, power, and cares of the self.

Texts

Michel Foucault  
This is Not a Pipe  
Michel Foucault  
Madness and Civilization  
Michel Foucault  
Discipline and Punishment  
Michel Foucault  
History of Sexuality  
Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose  
The Essential Foucault  
Pierre Hadot  
Philosophy as a Way of Life: Spiritual Exercises from Socrates to Foucault

Class Schedule

DISCOURSE

I have always been interested in the problem of the relationship between subject and truth. I mean, how does the subject fit into a certain [discourse or] game of truth? The first problem I examined was ... how... the mad subject [was] placed in this game of truth defined by a medical model.
1.) Sept 2: Introduction

2.) Sept 9: Structural Linguistics

   Belsey: *Very Short Introduction to Poststructuralism* (selections)
   Saussure: *Course in General Linguistics* (selections)
   Lewis: Dodging the Science Wars

3.) Sept 16: Magritte

   Foucault: *This is Not a Pipe*

4.) Sept 23: History of Madness

   Foucault: *Madness and Society* (*Essential Foucault*)
   Andreason: History of Psychiatry
   Gutting: Madness from *Very Short Introduction to Foucault*
   Foucault: *Madness and Civilization* (preface, conclusion)

5.) Sept 30: Discourse

   Foucault: *The Discourse on Language*
   Lewis: The New Psychiatry as a Discursive Practice
   Foucault: *Madness and Civilization* (Ch. 5—p117-135)
   Foucault: *Order of Things* (preface, conclusion)

6.) Oct 7: History of Madness Cont.—Professor Away

   Foucault: *Madness and Civilization* (Ch 2, 9)

**First Paper Due**

October 14—Fall Recess

**POWER**

*That sent me back to the problem of institutions of power... The word power...is simply a short hand for the expression I generally use: relations of power.*

7.) Oct 21: Knowledge/Power

   Foucault: *Discipline and Punishment*
   Part I: *Torture*
   Chapter 1: Body of the condemned
   Part III: *Discipline*
Chapter 1: Docile bodies

8.) Oct 28: Disciplinary Society

Foucault: *Discipline and Punishment*

  Part III: **Discipline**
  Chapter 2: The means of correct training
  Chapter 3: Panopticism

  Part IV: **Prison**
  Chapter 3: The Carceral

9.) Nov 4: Sexuality and Biopower

Foucault: *History of Sexuality* (p. 1-51) (p. 92-115)

10.) Nov 11: Biopolitics and ACT-UP

Foucault: *History of Sexuality* (p. 133-159)
Foucault: Truth and Power (*Essential Foucault*)
Foucault: Birth of Biopolitics (*Essential Foucault*)
Halperin: *Saint Foucault* Introduction
Crimp and Treichler: *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism*

**CARES OF THE SELF**

*If I am now interested in how the subject constitutes itself in an active fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, and his social group.*

Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom (1984)

11.) Nov 18: Subject and Ethics

Foucault: Technologies of the Self (*Essential Foucault*)
Foucault: Subject and Power (*Essential Foucault*)
Foucault: Genealogy of Ethics (*Essential Foucault*)

12.) Nov 25: Philosophy as a Way of Life

Foucault: Hermeneutics of the Subject (lecture 1 and course sum p. 498-505)
Foucault: Ethics of Concern as Practice of Freedom (*Essential Foucault*)
Haddot: Forms of Life and Forms of Discourse in Ancient Philosophy
Haddot: Spiritual Exercises

13.) Dec 2: Philosophy as a Way of Life
Epictitus and Marcus Aurelius
Haddot: Marcus Aurelius
Haddot: Reflections on Cultivation of the Self
Hadot: Philosophy as a Way of Life

DISCOURSE/POWER/CARES OF THE SELF

14.) Dec 9: Foucault and Post-Anarchism

Epicurus
Graeber and Grubacic: Anarchism or the Revolutionary Movement of the 21st Century
May: Is Post-structuralist Political Theory Anarchist?
Shepard: Introductory Notes on the Trail from ACT-UP to the WTO
Day: From Hegemony to Affinity: The Political Logic of the Newest Social Movements

***Final Paper due Dec 12 by 5 PM in my box***

Course Requirements

Grades are based on three parts: attendance/participation (20%) and 2 papers (40% each). Late papers are graded down. There will be an opportunity to rewrite the first paper if you desire. The attendance/participation grade is composed of weekly class attendance and participation.

On most days, class will begin with a short lecture on the material for that week. We then move to class discussion initiated by student selections from the material. To prepare for this part of the class, designated students will type two quotes which they have comments or questions from each week’s readings (include page numbers so we can find your quotes). We will initiate discussion from the quotes selected. Your quotes for each half of the class are turned in with your papers.

The papers are 6-7 pages type written, double spaced. Please use the material from the class to develop the topic question I hand out. Back up your thesis with arguments and examples from the class readings (include internal citations with page numbers and a reference list at the end).

A good paper demonstrates that you have integrated the material from the class discussions and readings and can use it to analyze your topic. Use the bulk of your energy reading closely and thinking seriously about the materials you have (rather than doing outside research). Also, be sure and give your paper a title.

The grading scale for the class will be as follows: 93-100% (A) 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 70-76 (C), 63-69 (D), and below (F).