

## Foucault

**Course Description:** Michel Foucault is among the most important philosophers in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy. His work has been highly influential across multiple disciplines in the humanities, and his ideas have become a central point of reference in contemporary political discourse. This course will provide an introduction to Foucault's work through a survey of some of his most influential texts and lecture courses across his career. Throughout the class, our aim will be to understand Foucault's innovative historical methodologies by reading texts that explain and enact his approaches to theorizing about the relevance of history for understanding contemporary political and scientific practices. We will pay special attention to his distinction between archeology and genealogy, to his concept of "histories of the present", and to his stated aim of "problematization".

In the first part of the course, we will focus on Foucault's archeological method and practice. We will begin by reading two texts that explain this method before continuing to see how this method works in practice, the Introduction to *Archeology of Knowledge* and "What is an Author?". We will then read selections from a major text of this period in which Foucault practices his archeological method, *The Order of Things*. In this portion of the course, our focus will be to understand Foucault's concepts of an *episteme* and a historical *a priori* and to see why Foucault thinks that historical study reveals a deep continuity in seemingly disparate sciences in one historical period and a deep discontinuity in seemingly related sciences in different historical periods. The rest of the course will focus on Foucault's genealogical method and practice. In this portion of the course, we will pay special attention to Foucault's claim that truth and knowledge are inseparable from power and to his periodization of power. We will again begin by reading one of his canonical statements of this method, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History". We will then read excerpts from some of the central texts of his genealogical period. We will begin by reading excerpts from *Discipline and Punish*, where Foucault articulates the distinction between sovereign and disciplinary power. We will then read two of the texts where Foucault articulates his highly influential concept of biopower, *History of Sexuality Vol 1* and "Society Must Be Defended".

### **Assignments and Grade Composition:**

Participation & Attendance      10%

All students are expected to regularly attend and participate in class. Your participation grade is, in part, determined by *respectfully* navigating any disagreements that arise in class.

Discussion Questions              20%

During the first class, students will sign up to submit discussion questions for three weeks of class. These questions should be well-motivated and refer to specific claims or arguments made in the reading for that class. The questions will be available to all enrolled students one day before class.

Midterm Paper                      30%

All enrolled students will write a 4-5 page exegetical paper explaining a specific argument or claim made by *one* author in *one* text. Students must select an argument or claim and have me approve the selection

Final Paper 40%

All enrolled students will write a 9-12 page argumentative paper that defends a specific claim that engages with the text(s) covered in the course. Students are encouraged, but not required, to incorporate material from midterm papers with appropriate revisions. All students must have their topics approved by me.

**Recommended Secondary:**

Leonard Lawler (ed.) *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*

Gary Gutting (ed.) *Cambridge Companion to Foucault*

Gary Gutting *Michel Foucault's Archeology of Scientific Reason*

Stuart Elden: *The Archeology of Foucault*

Colin Koopman *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity*

Thomas Flynn *Satre, Foucault, and Historical Reason*

Hubert Dreyfuss and Paul Rabinow *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*

**Schedule of Readings:**

**Part 1: Archeology**

**Week 1 (Archeological Method)**

*Archeology of Knowledge* (Introduction; Part II Ch. 1-3)

**Week 2 (Archeological Method cont.)**

*Archeology of Knowledge* (Part II Ch. 4-7)

**Week 3 (Archeology in Practice—Classical *Episteme*)**

*The Order of Things* (Chapter 5 “Classifying”)

**Week 4 (Archeology in Practice—Classical *Episteme* cont.)**

*The Order of Things* (Chapter 6 “Exchanging”)

**Week 5 (Archeology in Practice—Modern *Episteme*)**

*The Order of Things* (Chapter 7 “The Limits of Representation”)

**Week 6 (Archeology in Practice—Modern *Episteme* cont.)**

*The Order of Things* (Chapter 8 “Labour, Life, Language”)

**Week 7 (Archeology in Practice—Modern *Episteme* cont.; Transitioning to Genealogy)**

*The Order of Things* (Chapter 10 “The Human Sciences”)

*Archeology of Knowledge* (Part IV Ch 5)

**Part 2: Genealogy**

**Week 8 (Genealogical Method)**

“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” (From *The Foucault Reader*)

*The History of Sexuality Vol 1*. (Part IV Ch. 2 “Method”)

**Week 9 (Genealogy in Practice—Sovereign Power)**

*Discipline and Punish* (“The Body Condemned”)

**Week 10 (Genealogy in Practice—Sovereign Power cont.)**

*Discipline and Punish* (“The Spectacle of the Scaffold”)

**Week 11 (Genealogy in Practice—Punishment)**

*Discipline and Punish* (“Generalized Punishment”)

**Week 12 (Genealogy in Practice—Disciplinary Power cont.)**

*Discipline and Punish* (“Docile Bodies”)

**Week 13 (Genealogy in Practice—Disciplinary Power cont.)**

*Discipline and Punish* (“Panopticism—Complete and Austere Institutions” and “The Carceral”)

**Week 14 (Genealogy in Practice—Biopower)**

*“Society Must Be Defended”* (Lecture 11)

**Week 15 (Genealogy in Practice—Biopower cont.)**

*History of Sexuality Vol 1* (“Right of Death and Power over Life”)