COURSE DESCRIPTION

Michel Foucault (1926-1984), known as a foundational poststructural theorist, was a critical historian and philosopher whose work has influenced research throughout the humanities, social sciences, and some areas of business and organization management. Many students read Foucauldian-influenced material for courses without, however, reading Foucault’s own work and directly examining Foucauldian concepts. This course addresses this gap, specifically focusing on the Foucauldian concept governmentality.

‘Governmentality’ refers to the art (not the science) of government – how people’s behavior is indirectly guided relative to societal mentalities and regulated by particular rationalities or calculated courses of actions. ‘Governmentality,’ then, refers to the mentality and rationalities by which governance occurs. Many studies of governmentality focus on a neoliberal mentality and rationalities, but there are many others – from a variety of ‘isms such as racism, sexism, homophobia, and so on – to conspicuous or ethical consumption, development, the ‘American dream,’ and so on. Further, multiple governmentalities can co-exist.

Foucault considered governance in modern society to be an art because individuals are free (in the political sense) and have choices; thus, actions occur on the basis of choice, at least implicitly; they are a matter of indirect governance or self-government influenced by calculated strategies that guide choices, as opposed to direct coercion. Governance therefore entails the design of tactics (not laws) that guide free individuals in daily life to act in accordance with societal norms, which are communicated through a variety of texts or discourses that embed various mentalities. Such indirect rule means that governance is dissipated throughout formal and informal institutions in society at multiple scales; it is not confined to what is formally understood as ‘government’ or elected officials. As Foucault famously said of political theory “We have to cut off the king’s head,” signaling that governance is not confined to matters of ‘state’ and formal government, but rather what political geographers now commonly refer to as governance at a variety of scales (the body, households, classrooms, communities, web
sites, localities, nations, supranational organizations, networks, and so on). All actors, including but certainly not limited to, government or other officials, are enrolled in societal projects, indirectly guided by calculated tactics. Crucially, governmentality transcends specific contexts while playing out differently across contexts; thus specific contexts are not isolated microcosms but rather are connected to other contexts at other scales.

Foucault offered a novel view of power – power as ubiquitous (not confined to particular positions in a hierarchy) and diffuse (held by all actors, not a matter of power by one actor or entity over another). He recognized issues of hierarchy and repression, but he highlighted a diffuse and productive expression of power that commonly is overlooked. Given repression he would ask: how is it that repression is tolerated and sustained? What roles do different actors (including victims) play (even if unconsciously) in the production of such repression? How does mundane, everyday activity implicitly re/produce such repression? The source, then, of calculated tactics that may seem imposed from ‘the top’ (the apex of a hierarchy) is power relations among everyday people, a radical idea.

Foucault wrote specifically about governmentality in the latter part of his life, and his thoughts about governmentality changed considerably over time. Accordingly, there are different interpretations of what governmentality means depending on what works of Foucault one reads. This course will address governmentality as Foucault conceptualized it in different ways over time so that students develop a broad understanding of it and are able to position secondary materials relative to the evolution of the concept. For example, whereas Foucault’s early scholarship casts subjectivity as externally constituted, his later work examined how one could proactively change one’s subjectivity. Relatedly, whereas Foucault mentioned possibilities of resistance in his early work on governmentality, his later scholarship elaborated and engaged resistance.

Foucault’s conceptualization of resistance also is novel; it is about actors questioning societal norms and their own identities given to them by those norms (not about entities in conflict); the confrontation pertains to an individual’s refusal to blindly accept her/his identity given by societal discourse (not to one powerless group trying to gain power held by another group). Foucault’s interest in resistance, then, pertains to individual choice, and ultimately, the possible (but not inevitable!) transformation of one’s subjectivity. Especially interesting are the implications of Foucault’s framework for resistance or “counter-conducts” at the micro and mesoscales – how resistance can be effective if framed relative to the mentality and rationalities of oppressions, as opposed to a particular person or group at the apex of a hierarchy. Foucault expressed interest in collective action, but unfortunately he never connected his theory of individual resistance to upscaled action; that said, there is much to take from what Foucault did address over the course of his career towards thinking anew about collective resistance.

Foucault’s scholarship on governmentality includes topics such as how and when governmentality emerged in the world (though he did so from a Eurocentric perspective);¹ this topic is not within the scope of this course. This course is fundamentally about Foucault’s discussions of power, resistance, governance, and self, and how his conceptual framework is useful in research.

There are a variety of ways of examining governmentality over the course of one semester. This course emphasizes the epistemological significance of governmentality, that is, thinking about governmentality as a way to analyze the world around us. Although many poststructuralists are criticized for failing to examine issues ‘on the ground,’ Foucault’s engagement with governmentality is fundamentally about relating on-the-ground problems with broad-scale societal mentalities and discourses; it is an approach that focuses on the relation between the material and the immaterial, and in this sense is extremely helpful for social scientists grappling with connections between empirics and theory. In an interview Foucault said: “I haven’t written a single book that was not inspired, at least in part, by a direct personal experience.” It is the connection between mundane practices and societal mentalities and rationalities that makes governmentality both fascinating and intelligible: the concept

helps interpret ‘everydayness’ – daily practices in which individuals engage, often without consciousness of the linkage to macroscale, societal norms. Foucault did not, however, present governmentality as an analytical framework; this course ‘connects the dots’ across his various presentations of governmentality to develop an analytical framework that students can use in their research to conceptualize problems and a way to approach them.

One goal of the course (see ‘objectives’, below) is for students to critically read Foucault directly, and then empirically ground the ideas as a way to interpret the world in which they live. Towards this end, students will conduct their own, empirically grounded research (see ‘course strategy,’ below).

Coursework will include direct reading of Foucault (lectures, interviews, published articles mostly from the latter part of his career, from around 1978-1982). In the last few years of his life, Foucault became interested in ancient Greek philosophy, and the context for his analysis shifted from contingent historical events to ancient Greek plays; this course will include only some of this later scholarship. In addition, reading will include secondary Foucauldian scholarship that empirically grounds Foucault’s ideas about governmentality and resistance in case studies. There also exists a large secondary literature on ‘what Foucault said;’ for your information, the end of the syllabus lists some recommended reading from the more abstract, secondary literature. Secondary reading in this course is focused on empirical case studies, not conceptual critiques of Foucault’s work.

Finally, this course highlights the utility of a geographic perspective towards clarifying governmentality and resistance to societal norms. As will be discussed in class, Foucault wrote somewhat disparagingly about Geography as a discipline, but his view of Geography was narrow and relative to the discipline, notably in France, several decades ago. Actually, Foucault’s views of space, scale, context, and spatiality connect with, and actually can inform, critical human geography today.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES**

Students will use a geographic perspective to gain:

* an understanding of ‘governmentality’ relative to its multiple analytical dimensions that Foucault developed over the course of his career
* an understanding of how to use these concepts in empirically-based research.

Students will develop the above understandings through their own research experience. As elaborated under Course Strategy, below, students use their knowledge of governmentality and resistance to work through problems in their own environment; you develop research problems, questions, and analysis in groups and individually.

**COURSE STRATEGY**

* **Working groups and oral presentations**

A course focused on a concept (or more accurately, a set of related concepts) requires empirical grounding so that students can relate abstractions to life experiences. Grounding abstract concepts will occur through reading empirical case studies, but also through active engagement by the students in group projects. Towards this end, directly following the exam and before proposals for independent projects are due, the class will be divided into working groups, each of which will develop a different (locally grounded) case study of governmentality and orally present their case study to the class. Two classes will be devoted to a group workshop to offer a forum for students’ collaboration and also an opportunity for feedback; the groups will be small enough to permit students to effectively communicate outside class to prepare their oral presentation. The group projects require some, but not considerable, outside research. Students are encouraged to situate their projects in their local environment (OSU, a residential neighborhood, campus area, Columbus, or a familiar node in cyberspace such as Facebook…) so as to have empirics with which everyone is already familiar and, moreover, are ‘on hand’. The group project is less about data collection and more about tapping governmentality and related concepts to interpret a familiar world in which we all live but which has not necessarily been understood previously in terms of governmentality; the point is to open up insights from a governmentality analysis that would not otherwise be apparent.
The procedure is roughly as follows. Several broad topics for the study of governmentality will be ‘put on the table’ and the students will join/select a working group on a topic of interest. The range of topics will be developed relative to the mix of students and their interests; suggestions from the class are welcome. Once students are aligned with a group on a topic/context of interest, each group will then narrow the topic relative to the intersection of interests of the specific group of students. Each group will then develop a case study of governmentality and orally present to the class so that students become familiar with the projects of the other groups and thereby expand their frame of reference.

Past experience with this type of strategy in this course has been fruitful! Students enjoy the active engagement with concepts and appreciate the group as a source of interaction with other students and continual feedback. The group projects provide a means for people to connect abstract ideas with empirics with fellow students before developing their own independent project.

Independent research projects, poster, and paper (see also carmen web page on proposal guidelines)

The working groups (as well as the oral presentations that allow students to expand their frame of reference beyond their own group project) will provide research experience to help students to develop independent projects that will be represented at the end of the semester in (a) a poster for a poster session on the last day of class, and (b) a written paper at the end of the semester. The poster session is intended for students to become familiar with a broad range of projects and also permits interaction and critical discussion. The paper is handed in during final examination week so that students can make use of discussion at the poster session when finalizing the paper. Past experience with poster sessions when students work on independent projects has been very positive – students’ involvement with their own projects positions them to develop genuine interest in others’ research, and the poster session offers a forum for students to critically engage each other.

It is expected that the students in class will have diverse backgrounds and interests, and will be at different levels – some already with advanced interests and others in exploratory mode. In this light, it is expected that some students may develop independent projects that are based on already developed interests. Other students (especially students who have not already developed a particular, independent area of interest) may choose to elaborate on a dimension of a group project in the first half of the quarter. Often, students who come into the class without a developed background in a particular subject use this course as a vehicle to develop interests for which they previously have not found a productive outlet.

Brief proposals (2pp.) for the research project are due no later than Nov. 13. The proposals are not graded but are required and constitute part of course participation; they are an opportunity for students to crystallize their interests and receive feedback. Students are welcome to discuss their projects with N. Ettlinger at any time and can turn in revised proposals to get further feedback. One class, towards the end of the semester, will be devoted to discussing progress on individual research projects; students share and discuss their questions and problems.

Undergraduate students’ papers should be around 8-12 pages and should connect to course material and use at least 5 assigned references in addition to at least 5 academic references (journal articles, books); other references such as newspaper articles and websites are welcome but should be understood as additional to the required referencing. Undergraduates are encouraged to use their paper towards an undergraduate thesis and possibly revise for publication. Graduate students’ papers should be 15-25 pages, should reference course material, and also extend academic referencing well beyond course material. As reflected in the grading scheme below (see Evaluation and Grading), the final paper will figure more importantly for graduate students, who should use this course towards their research program; that is, approach the paper with the idea of further revising and using towards thesis or dissertation chapters or proposals or eventual submission to a journal for publication.

CLASS PREPARATION
Students are required to read the assigned material before, not after, the class in which material is to be discussed; note-taking on the assigned reading is strongly recommended. Lectures are prepared based on the
assumption that students are well prepared for class. Based on past experience, students who prepare inadequately for class are unlikely to perform well or at the level of their ability, and they are likely to fall behind and find themselves unable to effectively catch up. Written assignments are due on a day in which class does not occur to avoid conflict with class preparation.

CLASS ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION
Regular and punctual attendance is required. Students should drop this course if they have commitments that overlap with the class period. Students should indicate in advance if they cannot be at a particular class on time or have to leave in the middle due to uncontrolled circumstances that can be documented (e.g., a medical appointment). Students are responsible for any course material and announcements that are missed.

The participation portion of the evaluation (see below) depends on: general responsible class participation (i.e., participating on the basis of adequate preparation); responsible participation in the group project (i.e., actively participating in the research, coordination, and presentation); completion of the research proposal and revisions, if necessary; and participation in the poster session.

CLASS ETIQUETTE
Use of electronic devices in class for reasons other than class material is unacceptable.

READING (see pp. 7-8 for schedule; 9-11 for bibliographic information, subdivided by books and material that is electronically available on Canvas e-reserves). 5 books will be available through the OSU bookstores; 4 of the books (all but Michel Foucault/Power) are available as pdfs on the internet.

EXAM This course includes one take-home essay exam a bit past the middle of the semester. The exam requires critical synthesis of course material, and will position students to move forward with their projects. The exam should be double spaced, paginated, and proofed. Students have 9 days for the exam to permit time for organizing; it is not expected that students will spend all this time on the exams— the time frame is given in light of students' multiple responsibilities among courses, jobs, family responsibilities and so forth.

CANVAS POSTS Each class for which reading is assigned (following the course introduction, 1st day) students prepare brief comments and post them on Canvas (click on ‘Discussions’) for each article/chapter assigned for the required reading for that day (i.e., if there are 3 readings, each student should post 3 comments, one for each reading). The post should reflect knowledge of the main points of the article in relation to the topic for discussion (many of the readings are multidimensional; formulate your questions/comments with the topic for discussion in mind). Students are encouraged to read each others’ questions/comments before class, another avenue for learning in this course—from peers.

Go to 'Discussions' (left column on the course Canvas page). Please place all your comments/questions in the one post, with an indication of the title of the article you are commenting on.

EVALUATION and GRADING Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, a take-home essay examination, carmen questions, the poster, and final paper, as explained above.

The final grade will be figured on a 4.0 scale as follows:
Grades are figured by averaging the value of letter grades according to a 4.0 scale.

**MISCELLANEOUS REGULATIONS**

1) **Academic Misconduct:** It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/info_for_students/csc.asp).

2) No extra credit will be given in this course.

3) Incompletes are discouraged and will be permitted only under extenuating circumstances and with written documentation of plans for completion with approval from N. Ettlinger

**GEOGRAPHY 5601 FULFILLS THE FOLLOWING GEC REQUIREMENT:**

**Social science - organizations and polities**

**Expected Learning Outcomes:**

1. Students understand the theories and methods of social scientific inquiry as they apply to the study of organizations and polities.

2. Students understand the formation and durability of political, economic, and social organizing principles and their differences and similarities across contexts.

3. Students comprehend and assess the nature and values of organizations and polities and their importance in social problem solving and policy making.
### Syllabus

*Italicized references are in required books; all others (regular font) are accessible electronically on Canvas.

(F1, F2... directs you to the discussion forum for that date)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dates*</th>
<th>class discussion</th>
<th>required reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T Aug 22</td>
<td>course introduction</td>
<td>optional: Ettlinger ‘11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 24 F1</td>
<td>introduction to Foucault: contribution, context, shifts</td>
<td>Foucault '80a&amp;b - truth &amp; power; power &amp; strategies; '00a - subject and power</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 29 F2</td>
<td>governance and societal mentalities</td>
<td>Foucault '00b&amp;c - governmentality, omnes et singulatatem; Rosol</td>
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<td>Th 31 F3a</td>
<td>liberal and neoliberal mentalities</td>
<td>Foucault '08 - birth of biopolitics (chpts. 2, 3, 5, 6)</td>
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<td>T Sept 5 F3b</td>
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<td>Foucault '08 – birth of biopolitics (chpt. 9; pt. of 10); Loacker</td>
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<td>Th 7 F4</td>
<td>analytical issues: context &amp; focus on practices; scale; ascending analysis</td>
<td>Foucault '09d - questions of method; Foucault '08e - 2 lectures; Barry</td>
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<td>T 12 F5a</td>
<td>techniques of power: <em>biopower</em> &amp; the governance of population</td>
<td>Foucault '84 - right of death &amp; power over life; Foucault '80d - politics of health; Foucault '00e - birth of social medicine; Foucault '03 - society must be defended (ch. 11)</td>
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<td>Th 14 F5b</td>
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<td>Kang; Cheney-Lippold</td>
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<td>T 19 F6a</td>
<td>techniques of power: <em>disciplinary</em> power &amp; the ‘training’ of individuals</td>
<td>Foucault '95-discipline &amp; punish, pt. 3 (discipline – 3 chapters)</td>
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<td>Th 21 F6b</td>
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<td>Gore; Löwenheim &amp; Gazit</td>
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<td>T 26 F7a</td>
<td>resistance and ethics</td>
<td>Kant- Was ist Aufklärung?; Foucault '07b - what is critique?; Foucault ‘96-sex, power &amp; politics of identity; Lee</td>
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<td>Th 28 F7b</td>
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<td>Berman; Ettlinger '17</td>
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<td>T Oct 3 F7c</td>
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<td>Foucault '90-Intro., History of Sexuality v. 2; Foucault ‘97a&amp;b- genealogy of ethics; ethics of the concern for self; O'Grady</td>
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<tr>
<td>Th 5 F8a</td>
<td>governmentality and spatiality; case studies</td>
<td>Foucault '80e - questions of geography; Foucault ‘80f - eye of power; Jones et al.; revisit Berman</td>
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<td>T 10 F8b</td>
<td>exam handed out</td>
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<td>Th 12</td>
<td>NO CLASS – Autumn break!</td>
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<tr>
<td>T 17 F9</td>
<td>totalization and individuation</td>
<td>Foucault '00f - political technology of individuals; Crowly &amp; Kitchen; Evered &amp; Evered</td>
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<td>W 18</td>
<td>exams due – N. Ettlinger’s office, noon</td>
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<td>Th 19</td>
<td>workshop - preparation for group presentations</td>
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<td>T 24</td>
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<td>Th 26</td>
<td>group presentations</td>
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<td>T 31 F10a</td>
<td>Foucault’s ethical turn and critical normative thinking</td>
<td>Hermeneutics (chaps. 1, 10, 19)</td>
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<td>Th Nov 2</td>
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<td>Hermeneutics (chaps. 22, 23)</td>
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<td>T 7 F10b</td>
<td>critical recap on resistance</td>
<td>review - resistance</td>
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<td>W 13</td>
<td>research proposals due by e-mail (Word document) – noon</td>
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*Dates are tentative. Discussion may spill over into the next class, as needed.*
REQUIRED READING
Books (all available at OSU bookstores)
*** [available as pdf on internet]
chapters cited in syllabus, above:

***[available as pdf on internet]


articles (e-reserves under 'modules' on Canvas page)


***

**NOT REQUIRED: SOME RECOMMENDED SECONDARY LITERATURE ON FOUCALT**


Mühlen-Schulte, A. 2012. Full faith in credit? The power of numbers in rating frontier sovereigns and the global governmentality of development by the UNDP. *Journal of International Relations and Development* 15: 466-485.


**journals: special issues**

*Foucault Studies*

special issue of *Theory, Culture & Society* 2009 26(6): Thinking after Michel Foucault.

special issue of *Social Identities* 2010 16(5): Foucault, 25 years on.

**biographic material**


**e-newsletter**

Foucault News - [http://foucaultnews.com](http://foucaultnews.com)

**websites**

[http://www.keele.ac.uk/bos/index.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/bos/index.htm)

**Foucault’s last lectures series**

