

**PHL 559: FOUCAULT  
FOUCAULT: ON METHOD**

Kevin Thompson

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This seminar is an examination of Foucault's distinctive historical method. All of Foucault's major works are undoubtedly histories, but they are all just as undoubtedly unconventional histories. What makes them unique is their object of investigation. They seek to uncover a stratum of experience that eludes those concerned solely with what has been said, what has been done, and what has been endured, the collection of arbitrary facts we typically call human history. Foucault designated this stratum with a variety of terms or phrases throughout his career: the concrete a priori, the *épistème*, the historical a priori, the *dispositif* (deployment, apparatus), the form of problematization, and the game of truth. Yet he consistently defined it as the historically changing requirements that forms of knowledge and ways of acting had to fulfill in order to be counted as valid instances of knowing and acting and that the objects and events involved in these modes of knowledge and action had to meet in order to be counted as existing entities and occurrences at all. In this sense, what Foucault's historical studies tracked were the necessary structures by virtue of which thinking, doing, and being become possible. In a word, then, the rules that Foucault sought were transcendental.

But to say that a set of structures is transcendental has traditionally meant that the conditions in question are not only necessary, but universal and timeless as well. Foucault's coupling of the terms 'a priori' and 'historical' thus appears to render his central methodological concept self-contradictory. How, then, can a set of conditions be at once the operative structures by virtue of which thought and action are what they are and at the same time be mutable forms that set down the boundaries of acceptability for what is knowable and doable within a specific age? That is to say, how can they be at once transcendental and historical and how can they be grasped as such?

The seminar will explore this fundamental problematic and the central questions of historiography that it raises—selection (of source materials and evidence), periodization, and justification of interpretation, as well as the issue of presentism—through a reading of Foucault's principal methodological statements (*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, "The Order of Discourse," *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, "What is Critique?," *The History of Sexuality, Volume II*, and "What is Enlightenment?") together with one of his most instructive historical inquiries, his sustained exploration of the birth of modern medicine (*The Birth of the Clinic* [1963, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., 1972] and the set of public lectures he delivered on this topic in Rio de Janeiro [October, 1974]).

**TEXTS**

Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (Vintage, 9780679753346)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language* (Pantheon, 9780394711065)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction* (Vintage, 9780679724698)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The History of Sexuality, Volume II: The Use of Pleasure* (Vintage, 9780394751221)  
\_\_\_\_\_, *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984* (The New Press, 9781565848016)

**REQUIREMENTS**

One thematic paper (3000-4500 words), due at Noon, Monday, 13 June 2016

## RECOMMENDED SECONDARY SOURCES

### I. GENERAL

James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Towards an Ethics of Thought* (Humanities, 1990)  
Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* (Minnesota, 1988)  
Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd Ed. (Chicago, 1983)  
Clare O'Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (Sage, 2005)  
Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (Tavistock, 1980)

### II. SCHOLARLY RESOURCES

Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki, eds, *A Companion to Foucault* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013)  
Leonard Lawlor and John Nale, eds. *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon* (Cambridge, 2014)  
Dianna Taylor, ed. *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* (Acumen, 2011)

### III. ANTHOLOGIES

Arnold I. Davidson, ed. *Foucault and his Interlocutors* (University of Chicago, 1997)  
Mike Gane and Terry Johnson, eds. *Foucault's New Domains* (Routledge, 1993)  
Jan Goldstein, ed. *Foucault and the Writing of History* (Blackwell, 1994)  
Gary Gutting, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault* (Cambridge, 1994; 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., 2003)  
David Couzens Hoy, ed. *Foucault: A Critical Reader* (Blackwell, 1986)  
Barry Smart, *Michel Foucault: Critical Encounters*, 7 vols. (Routledge, 1995)  
*Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, trans. Timothy J. Armstrong (Routledge, 1992)

### IV. FOUCAULT'S HISTORICAL METHODOLOGY

Robert Castel, “‘Problematization’ as a Mode of Reading History,” in *Foucault and the Writing of History*, 237-252.  
Mitchell Dean., *Critical and Effective Histories: Foucault's Methods and Historical Sociology* (Routledge, 1994)  
Thomas R. Flynn, *Sartre, Foucault, and Historical Reasoning, Volume Two: A Poststructuralist Mapping of History* (Chicago, 2005)  
Gary Gutting, *Michel Foucault's Archaeology of Scientific Reason* (Cambridge, 1989)  
Béatrice Han (-Pile), *Foucault's Critical Project: Between the Transcendental and the Historical* (Stanford, 2002)  
Colin Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique: Foucault and the Problems of Modernity* (Indiana, 2013)  
Clare O'Farrell, *Foucault: Historian or Philosopher?* (Macmillan, 1989)  
Edward F. McGushin, *Foucault's Askesis: A Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Northwestern, 2007)  
Paul Veyne, “Foucault Revolutionizes History,” in *Foucault and his Interlocutors*, 146-182.  
David Webb, *Foucault's Archaeology: Science and Transformation* (Edinburgh, 2013)

## READING SCHEDULE

### MARCH

29: Course Introduction

Maurice Florence, “Foucault” [1984] [*The Essential Foucault*, 1-5]

*The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* [1963, 2<sup>nd</sup> rev. ed., 1972], Preface (ix-xix), & chaps. 1 & 4-6 (3-21 & 54-106)

### APRIL

#### I. ARCHAEOLOGY

5: *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, chaps. 8-9, & Conclusion (124-173 & 195-199)

*Cahiers*, Volume 9: Position of the Genealogy of Sciences, Foreword [on reserve]

The Cercle d’Épistémologie, “To Michel Foucault” [1968] [on reserve]

Foucault, “Response to the Epistemology Circle” [1968] [EF, 392-422]

The Cercle d’Épistémologie, “New Questions” [1968] [on reserve]

12: *The Archaeology of Knowledge* [1969], Introduction [3-17]

*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Part II: The Discursive Regularities [21-76]

19: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Part III: The Statement and the Archive [Chaps. 1-2: 79-105]

26: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Part III: The Statement and the Archive [Chaps. 3-5: 106-131]

### MAY

3: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Part IV: Archaeological Description [135-195, esp. 135-140 & 157-195]

*The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Part V: Conclusion [199-211]

#### II. GENEALOGY

10: “Candidacy Presentation” [1969] [on reserve]

“Foreword to the English Edition” [1970] [on reserve]

“The Order of Discourse” [1971] [Translated as “The Discourse on Language,” Appendix to *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 215-237]

“Nietzsche, Genealogy, History” [1971] [EF, 351-369]

17: “The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Antimedicine” [Public Lecture I, State University of Rio de Janerio, October, 1974, published, 1976] [on reserve]

“The Birth of Social Medicine” [Public Lecture II, State University of Rio de Janerio, October, 1974, published, 1977] [EF, 319-337]

“The Incorporation of the Hospital into Modern Technology” [Public Lecture III, State University of Rio de Janerio, October, 1974, published, 1978] [on reserve]

“The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century” [Introduction, 1976] [EF, 338-350]

“The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century” [Reed. (with modifications), 1979] [on reserve]

Recommended: *Psychiatric Power*, Lectures of 23 & 30 January 1974 [233-295, esp. 233-254 & 265-269]

#### III. THE CRITICAL HISTORY OF THOUGHT

24 [time: tbd]: *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* [1976], Part Four: The Deployment of Sexuality [77-131]

“What is Critique?” [Delivered, 27 May 1978; Published, 1990] [EF, 263-278]

“The Subject and Power” [1982] [EF, 126-144]

Recommended: *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, Part Five: Right of Death and Power over Life [133-159]

“Society Must be Defended,” Lecture of 17 March 1976 [239-264]

*Security, Territory, Population*, Lectures of 11 January-1 February 1978 [1-114]

31: "Preface to *The History of Sexuality, Volume II*" [1984] [on reserve]  
*The History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Use of Pleasure* [1984], Introduction [3-32]  
"What is Enlightenment?" [1984] [EF, 43-57]  
Maurice Florence, "Foucault" [1984] [EF, 1-5]

Recommended: *The History of Sexuality, Volume Two: The Use of Pleasure* [1984], Part Two: Dietetics  
*The History of Sexuality: Volume 3: The Care of the Self* [1984], Part Four: The Body

#### **MATERIAL ON ELECTRONIC RESERVE**

Anonymous, "Foreword," *Cahiers*, Volume 9: Position of the Genealogy of Sciences, in *Concept and Form: Volume 1, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, eds. Peter Hallward and Knox Peden (London: Verso, 2012, 9781844678723, 262 pp.), 66-67.

The Cercle d'Épistémologie, "On the Archaeology of the Sciences: Questions for Michel Foucault," in *Concept and Form: Volume 1, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, 151-154.

\_\_\_\_\_, "New Questions," in *Concept and Form: Volume 1, Selections from the Cahiers pour l'Analyse*, 154-158.

Michel Foucault, "Candidacy Presentation: Collège de France, 1969," in his *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, *The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984, Volume I* (New York: The New Press, 1997, 1565843525, 334 pp.), 5-10.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Foreword to the English Edition," in his *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1973, 9780679753353, 387 pp.), ix-xiv.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Crisis of Medicine or the Crisis of Antimedicine," *Foucault Studies*, no.1 (2004): 5-19.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Incorporation of the Hospital into Modern Technology," in *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography*, eds. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden (New York: Ashgate Publishing, 2007, 9780754646549, 377 pp.), 141-151.

\_\_\_\_\_, "The Politics of Health in the Eighteenth Century," *Foucault Studies*, no. 18 (2014): 113-127.

\_\_\_\_\_, "Preface to *The History of Sexuality, Volume II*," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984, 0394713400, 390 pp.), 333-339.