

Queer Theory's Foucault

Center for Women's and Gender Research (SKOK)
University of Bergen, Norway
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Description

This course will read Michel Foucault's critical influence on the intellectual and political formation of queer theory since it emerged as a distinct body of knowledge in the early 1990s. While Foucault did not live to see queer theory take up his name as one of its founding figures, there is no one more famous for shaping the field's major theoretical concerns about sexuality, subjectivity, modernity, and power. Whether figured as a call to jettison "sex-desire" in favor of "bodies and pleasures," or to challenge juridical notions of sovereignty and rights by attending to biopower, or to refute humanism by insisting that the nineteenth century birthed "the homosexual" as "a species," Foucault engaged the most significant intellectual inheritances of the twentieth century: psychoanalysis, Marxism, and liberalism. By situating "Queer Theory's Foucault" in the context of these intellectual traditions, we will trace not only the generative force of *The History of Sexuality* but how it has remained central to ongoing queer theoretical labors. Key engagements with Foucault will include familiar figures from the field (Leo Bersani, Judith Butler, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick) as well as those working in other left critical traditions. This course is an intensive seminar; participants will be expected to do *all* the reading on the course syllabus.

Background Reading

Useful before and after the course!

1. Foucault, Michel. Michel Foucault: The Culture of the Self: Introduction and Program, Part I [\[Listen!\]](#) April 12, 1983: Berkeley Language Center - Speech Archive SA 1456
2. Foucault, Michel. Michel Foucault: The Culture of the Self: Introduction and Program Part II and Discussion [\[Listen!\]](#) April 12, 1983: Berkeley Language Center - Speech Archive SA 1456
3. Foucault, Michel. Michel Foucault: The Culture of the Self: Introduction and Program Part III and Discussion [\[Listen!\]](#) April 12, 1983: Berkeley Language Center - Speech Archive SA 1456
4. Foucault, Michel. *History of Sexuality Volume 1: An Introduction*.

5. Foucault, Michel. "History and Homosexuality."
6. Foucault, Michel. "The Danger of Child Sexuality."
7. Foucault, Michel. "The End of the Monarchy of Sex."

Course Schedule

August 28

Session 1 9:00-12:00 **Foucault's Queer Archive**

Read: Michel Foucault, "The West and the Truth of Sex"

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 2: Introduction and Conclusion*

Listen: Michel Foucault, *The Culture of the Self*, Berkeley Lectures

Session 2 14:00-17:00 **Historicizing History**

Read: Didier Eribon, "Michel Foucault's Histories of Sexuality"

David Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault" (excerpted)

Karma Lochrie, "Desiring Foucault"

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Axiomatic"

August 29

Session 1 9:00-12:00 **Homosexuality and Politics**

Read: Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life"

—, "Sexual Choice, Sexual Acts"

—, "History and Homosexuality"

David Halperin, "Michel Foucault, Jean Le Bitoux, and the Gay Science
Lost and Found: An Introduction"

Michel Foucault, Nicolae Morar, and Daniel W. Smith, "The Gay
Science" (Interview)

Frank Mort and Roy Peters, "Foucault Recalled: An Interview with Michel
Foucault"

Christopher Lane, "Foucault and Extradiscursive Sexuality"

Session 2 14:00- 17:00 **Bodies and Pleasures**

Read: John Champagne, "Interrupted Pleasure" (pgs 181-194)

Leo Bersani, "Foucault, Freud, Fantasy, and Power"

Judith Butler, "Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures"

Annamarie Jagose, "Counterfeit Pleasures: Fake Orgasm and
Queer Agency"

August 30

Session 1 9:00-12:00 **Biopolitics**

Read: Jeffrey Nealon, "Once More, with Intensity: Foucault's History of Power Revisited"

Michel Foucault, "7 January 1976" (from *Society Must be Defended*)

Michel Foucault, "The Birth of Biopolitics"

David Glover, "Foucault, Sexuality, Liberalism: A Commentary"

Ann Laura Stoler, "Placing Race in the *History of Sexuality*"

Chandan Reddy, "Freedom's Amendments"

Session 2 14:00-17:00 **Normativity**

Read: Judith Butler, "Bodies and Power Revisited"

Janet Jakobsen, "Queer Is, Queer Does? Normativity and the Problem of Resistance" (pgs 511-22)

Michael Warner, "Normal and Normaller: Beyond Gay Marriage"

Annamarie Jagose, "About Time: Simultaneous Orgasm"

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- . "Revisiting Bodies and Pleasures." *Theory Culture Society* 16.2 (1999): 11-20.
- Champagne, John. "Interrupted Pleasure: A Foucauldian Reading of *Hard Core*/A Hard Core Misreading of Foucault." *Boundary 2* 18.2 (Summer 1991): 181-206.
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- . *The Culture of the Self: Introduction and Program Part II*. [\[Listen!\]](#) April 12, 1983: Berkeley Language Center - Speech Archive SA 1456: http://dpg.lib.berkeley.edu/webdb/mrc/search_vod?keyword=michel+foucault.
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- <http://www.ipce.info/ipceweb/Library/danger.htm>.
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 - *History of Sexuality, Volume 2: The Use of Pleasure*. (1984). Trans. Robert Hurley. NY: Vintage Books, 1990.
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- “Michel Foucault, Jean Le Bitoux, and the Gay Science Lost and Found: An Introduction.” *Critical Inquiry* 37 (Spring 2011): 371-80.
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