

Queer Theory's Foucault

Center for Women's and Gender Research (SKOK)
University of Bergen, Norway
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Professor Robyn Wiegman
Literature and Women's Studies
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina, USA 27708
rwiegman@duke.edu

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 need to be able to devote significant time *before arriving* in Bergen to the material on the course schedule below.

Course Schedule

The course will move between Foucault's work and the body of scholarship that has been developed under the framework of queer theory. The reading list is long, but many of the pieces are short, so don't be deterred by how much we will cover! A full bibliography follows the schedule.

August 28

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

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

- , *History of Sexuality, Volume 1*
- , *History of Sexuality, Volume 2: Introduction and Conclusion*
- , *The Culture of the Self*, Three Berkeley Lectures (Listen to at Least One)

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

Discussion: Didier Eribon, "Michel Foucault's Histories of Sexuality"
David Halperin, "Forgetting Foucault" (excerpted)
Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Axiomatic"

August 29

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

Discussion: Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life"
—, "Sexual Choice, Sexual Acts"
—, "History and Homosexuality"
—, 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**

Discussion: 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**

Discussion: Jeffrey Nealon, "Once More, with Intensity: Foucault's History of Power Revisited" (Recommended)
Michel Foucault, "7 January 1976" (from *Society Must be Defended*)
—, "The Birth of Biopolitics"
David Glover, "Foucault, Sexuality, Liberalism: A Commentary"
Chandan Reddy, "Freedom's Amendments"

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

Discussion: 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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