

# PHIL 5200: Topics in Continental Philosophy

Wednesday, 10:15am - 1:00pm

Prof. Daniele Lorenzini (he/him)

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## Course description:

Michel Foucault is one of the most influential philosophers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His analysis of discourse, power, and forms of subjectivation, as well as the methodologies he used in his work (archaeology and genealogy), have been widely discussed, praised, and drawn upon. Yet Foucault is also a controversial figure, often labelled a “postmodern” thinker and criticized for being a champion of relativism or for practicing a dangerous reductionism of truth to power. In this seminar we will see why these criticisms stem from an imperfect understanding of Foucault’s philosophical and critical projects. The seminar will be devoted to an in-depth analysis and discussion of some of his major works, including *The Order of Things* (1966), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), the first two volumes of his *History of Sexuality* (1976, 1984), as well as a selection of his lectures and interviews. We will thus clarify the main features of Foucault’s project, reconstruct its complex development, and problematize its conclusions, while also emphasizing its enduring relevance for current debates in ethics, political and social philosophy, philosophy of language, and epistemology.

## Readings:

Each week, you are expected to engage with the readings if you are to participate effectively in class discussion and write good papers on your chosen topic. All essential readings will be available on Canvas. Please bring them to class in one form or another.

## Assignments:

### - Class participation (15%)

Each week, come to class with one short quote from the readings that you found particularly interesting or problematic, and be ready to explain why you chose it and what questions it raises for you.

### - Oral presentation (25%)

### - Final paper (15-20 pages) (60%)

Please discuss your chosen paper topic with me in advance of the last few weeks of class; I am happy to give you oral and/or written feedback on a detailed plan before you begin writing your final paper.

## Office hours:

By appointment: please email me to schedule a meeting in person (Cohen 424) or on Zoom.