PhD course: Foucault: Organization, Technology, and Subject-formation

LINK to the course site: https://phdsupport.nemtilmeld.dk/38/ ????

Date and time
Tuesday 8th June at 09.00 to 11th June 2027 at 16:00

Registration Deadline
18th May 2027 at 23:55

Location
Room TBA, Campus TBA, 2000 Frederiksberg, Denmark

Course coordinator: Kaspar Villadsen, Department of Business Humanities and Law (BHL)

Organizer
CBS PhD School, Nina Iversen, Phone: +45 3815 2475, ni.research@cbs.dk

Faculty

Professor Sverre Raffnsøe
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Associate Professor Kaspar Villadsen
Department of Business Humanities and Law, CBS

Prerequisites

Only PhD students can participate in the course.

Participation requires submission of a short paper (see more below). Papers must be in English and deadline is **24th May 2027.**

It is a precondition for receiving the course diploma that the PhD student attends the whole course.

Aim

The course will provide the participants with:

1. An introduction to key analytical potentials reconstructed from Foucault's wide-ranging authorship as well as the lecturers' own research projects.
2. In particular, we will discuss different approaches to themes of organization, technology, and subject-formation as they are deployed in state-of-the-art Foucault-inspired scholarship.
3. The potentials and limits of the particular way Foucauldian analytics can be applied in the participant's research will be discussed. Hence, a range of analytical resources and potentials will be explored and discussed in relation to the participants' current research.

Course content

Michel Foucault's work continues to offer a major source of inspiration for PhD projects across a wide range of disciplinary domains. This PhD course explores how Foucault's work speaks to three broad themes in contemporary business school research and beyond: Organization, technology, and subject-formation. The lecturers on the course have all pursued substantive research on these themes, drawing upon different parts of Foucault's authorship, and they will base their teaching on this research experience. A key aim of the course is that the participants acquire an effective overview of analytical possibilities in Foucault's work, effective for selecting and deploying such analytics in their own research.

Overall, Foucault's thinking can help to inquire into the organizations, technologies and techniques of self-formation that make up the conditions of possibility for our contemporary experiences. First, Foucault's usual genealogical approach (Foucault 1977, 1984) works by tracing how contemporary forms of organization emerged from past struggles, political strategies, and accidental events. From this perspective, the prevailing modes of organizing can be better grasped by recovering their historical conditions of emergence and dispersion. Genealogy takes as its basic premise that history, as well as our present, is a site of evolving struggle, including contest over divergent interpretations, which the development of modern modes of organizing and managing clearly displays. Hence, struggles around definitions and uses of appropriate management, leadership, accountability, transparency or sustainability make up pertinent material for genealogical inquiry.

Foucault developed his own notion of technology during the 1970s, namely the concept of "the dispositive". A dispositive is defined as a historical configuration, which connects a series of discursive and non-discursive elements such as laws, practices, material artefacts, procedures, and techniques (Foucault, 1980). It designates a propensity in knowledge production and social practice as well as a "dispositionality" in how institutions emerge and transform. The concept opens for analyzing how our practices – for example, risk assessments or anti-pandemic strategies – are conditioned by dispositives that have been formed in historical processes often spanning several centuries. Foucault (2007) suggested that the dispositives of law, discipline and security have been particularly important as responses to thorny governmental problems such as crime, infectious diseases, population welfare, and labor unrest. Current problems such as climate change, environmental degradation and extreme inequality could be analyzed as straddling between these deep-rooted frameworks of calculation, intervention and rationalization. The dispositive has recently been introduced into Foucauldian scholarship as a highly promising analytical resource (##), and the course will explore how it can be used for empirical inquiries.

Finally, Foucault's late authorship in the early 1980s, often termed his "ethical turn", took him back to techniques of self-formation in Early Christianity and Greco-Roman antiquity. There, Foucault noticed a "technical" notion of ethics less defined by submission to universal moral codes and instead focused more on the self's work upon the self.

Foucault's attention to ethics in the early 1980s hardly signified a departure from political issues, but a re-conception of politics as an ethical politics. The work on your own freedom that ethics comprise is political, Foucault argued, in the sense that our self-fashioning involves what we are willing to accept or want to change in ourselves as well as in our circumstances: "[T]here is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself" (Foucault, 2005: 252). Perhaps, the urgent issues of our time call for developing another form of ethics rather than models rooted in legal frameworks and Christian morality. The recent emergence of responsible consumers, 'life-long learners', climate conscious youths, "freeganism", and fluid gender identity could be analyzed with inspiration from

Foucault's work on ethics and self-formation. An analytical key task that will be addressed in this part of the course is how to integrating Foucault's notion of technology, the dispositive, with his analysis of self-technology, hence bridging the mid-career Foucault's analytics of power with the late Foucault's ethics.

The theme of this PhD course requires that the participants engage in some way with Foucault's historical work, his analytical frameworks, his concepts, or his approach to organization, technology, and subjectivity. Papers that are not underpinned exclusively by Foucauldian analytics but also derive from other thinkers and traditions are welcome too. Our point of departure is that Foucauldian analytics is not only pertinent to philosophical research, since such analytics can also find application in ethnographic, sociological, organizational, historical, and anthropological research.

Teaching style

The goal is to sharpen the participants' knowledge of the Foucauldian toolbox of analytical resources and how these can be applied in PhD projects. To that end we will set aside sufficient time to carefully examine and discuss the papers submitted by the participants. The course will consist of both workshops and lectures/presentations by scholars who are specialist in Foucault's work and subsequent Foucauldian scholarship. The goal of the lectures is, first, to clarify the ways in which Foucault worked with his most significant analytics and, second, to demonstrate how to put the analytics at work in specific analysis. The aim of the workshops is to explore how Foucauldian analytics function (or possible may be employed) in each participant's research – with the aim of strengthening, deepening and nuancing the participants' dissertations or research articles. In the workshops, the course participants are divided into smaller groups (using shared topics and/or approaches as choice criteria) enabling a substantial peer discussion of both paper and their research project. Each workshop will be supervised and organized by one of lecturers.

All participants are required to submit a paper that deals with the key theme(s) of the PhD project in question. Papers that apply Foucauldian analytics to empirical problems in a variety of domains are welcomed, but so are papers that draw upon other thinkers and traditions. Perhaps the PhD student is interested in considering whether it would be interesting to include perspectives drawn from Foucault and Foucauldian scholarship in their PhD project.

It is possible to submit two kinds of papers. The first option is a short paper/abstract, which briefly presents the PhD student's project and perhaps poses some questions regarding how it could include perspectives from Foucault. The second option is to submit a brief paper (5-10 pages), which presents the PhD project and some key theoretical and/or empirical considerations, and it can perhaps include notions from Foucault such as power, knowledge, governmentality, technologies of power, self-technology, etc. The key idea is that each participant will take home lots of beneficial inputs to his/her PhD project based on a discussion of challenges and potentials in the project.

Papers must be in English.

Learning objectives

• Achieve a strong reflexivity regarding how the choice of analytics from Foucault's authorship brings certain questions, problems, entities and processes into the foreground of analysis and critical consideration.

- Awareness of different ways of working with Foucauldian analytics in PhD dissertations, articles and academic writing in general. This awareness will particular concern and be exemplified by the

themes of organization, technology, and subjectivity. However, as mentioned above, these themes are not exclusive.

- The course will increase participant's critical ability to account for the potential role of Foucauldian analytics, in general, and how it is applied in the participant's research, specifically. This reflexivity concerns, inter alia, the epistemological distinctiveness of Foucauldian analytics, the social ontology its assumes, the analytical practices involved in Foucauldian scholarship, and the potential critical effects of such scholarship. Finally, the increased reflexivity relates to the range of Foucauldian analytical resources that can be effectively explored in relation to the participants' current research.

Lecture plan (maybe be subject to minor changes)

During the workshops, the participants will be divided into smaller groups each supervised by one of the course teachers.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
9.00-10.30	Lecture 1: What Is genealogy? (KV)	Lecture 4: Dispositive proto-typology (MGH)	Lecture 7: Problematization analysis (MGH)	Lecture 10: Affirmative critique in Foucault (SR)
10.45-12.00	Workshops on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]	Workshops on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]	Workshops on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]	Workshops on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]
	(KV) (MGH)	(KV) (MGH)	(KV) (MGH)	(KV) (MGH)
12.00-12.45	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
12.45-14.00	Lecture 2: The Archaeological method (TK)	Lecture 5: The subject and subjectivation (KV)	Lecture 8: Uses of Foucault in organisation studies (KV)	Roundtable discussion (MGH, SR, TK, KV)
14.15-15.00	Short lecture 3: Variants of biopolitics (KV)	Short lecture 6: Veridiction and security in *Birth of Biopolitics* (MGH)	Short lecture 9: From vital politics to human capital (MGH)	Workshop on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]
				(KV) (MGH)
15.15-16.30	Workshops on PhD papers	Workshops on PhD papers	Workshops on PhD papers [2 x 2-3]	Evaluation and farewell
			(KV) (MGH)	

LITERATURE (to be finalized):

MONDAY:

For lecture 1: What Is Genealogy? (KV)

- Foucault, M. 2003. '*Society Must Be Defended': Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*. New York: Picador. [Lectures one and two].
- Villadsen, K. 2024. *Foucault's Technologies: Another Way of Cutting Reality*. Oxford University Press. [Chapter Five, pp. 267-304].

Background, optional:

- Karlsen, M. P. and K. Villadsen. 2015. 'Foucault, Maoism, Genealogy: The Influence of Political Militancy in Michel Foucault's Thought'. *New Political Science*, 37(1): 91–117.

For lecture 2: (KV)

- Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. New York: Palgrave. [Lectures one and two].

For lecture 3: (KV)

- Villadsen, K. (2021) "'The Dispositive': Foucault's Concept for Organizational Analysis?" *Organization Studies*, 42(3): 473-494.

TUESDAY:

For lecture 4: Dispositive Proto-Typology [and the notions of governmentality] (MGH)

- Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. New York: Palgrave (**Lectures 1** + **Lecture 4,** excerpt, pages 106-111].
- Foucault, M. (2007). *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. New York: Palgrave. (**Lecture 3**).

Background, optional:

- Raffnsøe, S., M. Gudmand-Høyer, M. S. Thaning: "Chapt. 7: The Governmentalization of the State", excerpt: 2. The early linage of governmentality and dispositional analysis; 3. Later developments in the notion of governmentality, pp. 236-258, in: Id.: *Foucault: A Research Companion.* New York & London: Palgrave, 2016.

For lecture 5: The subject and Subjectivation (KV)

- Foucault, M. (1982) "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4): 777-795.
- Villadsen, K. (2024) "'The Subject and Power' – Four Decades Later: Tracing Foucault's Evolving Concept of Subjectivation." *Foucault Studies*, (36): 293–321. Available at: https://rauli.cbs.dk/index.php/foucault-studies/article/view/7220

Background, optional:

- Villadsen, K. (2023) "Goodbye Foucault's 'Missing Human Agent'?: Self-formation, Capability and the Dispositifs." *European Journal of Social Theory*, 26(1): 67–89.

For short lecture 6: Veridiction and Security in* The Birth of Biopolitics *(MGH):

- Foucault, M. (2007) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. New York: Palgrave. (**Lecture 2** and **Lecture 10** + beginning of **Lecture 11**).

WEDNESDAY:

For lecture 7: The (Lost) Object of Problematization (MGH)

- Foucault, M. (2014) "Interview with André Berten, May 7, 1981", pp. 235-246 in: *Wrong-Doing, Truth-Telling: The function of avowal in justice.* The University of Chicago Press.
- Lecture 1, excerpt (pp. 1-6) of Foucault, M. (2010). *The Government of Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983.* New York/London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Background, optional:

- Excerpts (Introduction, pp. 1-15 + Part 2, pp. 33-42) from Gudmand-Høyer and Kogut (2025; work in progress): "The (lost) object of problematization analysis: A comprehensive review of a central notion in Michel Foucault's later work (1975-1984)".

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For short lecture 9: From vital politics to human capital investing:

- Foucault, M. (2007) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. New York: Palgrave. (**Lecture 6** and **Lecture 9**).

For lecture 10: Critique á la Foucault (SR):

- Foucault, Michel ([1980] 1994), "Le philosophe masqué," in Michel Foucault (1994), *Dits et écrits. Volume IV* (Paris: Gallimard): 104-115// Foucault, Michel (1994), "The Masked Philosopher", in Michel Foucault (1994), *The Essential Foucault: Selections from Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984,* edited by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose (New York: The New Press): 174-179
- Michel Foucault, Michel ([1978] 1990), "Qu'est-ce que la critique?", *Bulletin de la société française de Philosophie,* 84^{e} année, N$_{o}$ 2: 35-63// Michel Foucault, What Is Critique? & The Culture of the Self.
- Edited by H-P Fruchaud, D. Lorenzini, and A. I. Davidson, translated by C. O'Farrell, University of Chicago Press, January 2024.
- Butler, Judith ([2000] 2004), "What is Critique? An essay on Foucault's Virtue," in Judith Butler (2004), *The Judith Butler Reader,* edited by Sara Salih. Malden (USA; Oxford, UK; Carlton, Australia: Blackwell Publishing).

Background, optional:

- Raffnsøe, Sverre; Gudmand-Høyer, Marius; Thaning, Morten (2016): "Foucault's dispositive: The perspicacity of dispositive analytics in organizational research," *Organization:* Vol. 23(2) 2016: 272–298
- Latour, Bruno (2004): "Why has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern," *Critical Inquiry 30* [Winter 2004), pp. 225-248.
- Raffnsøe, Sverre; Mennicken, Andrea; Miller, Peter (2019): "The Foucault Effect in organization studies," journal *Organization Studies,* 2019, Vol. 40(2): 155–182.
- Staunæs, Dorthe; Raffnsøe, Sverre; Brøgger, Katja (2025), "Affirmative critique as counter-archiving and an-archiving: For another academic freedom to come," journal *Educational Philosophy and Theory,* https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2025.2500373/ https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00131857.2025.2500373?af=R#abstract
- Raffnsøe, Sverre; Staunæs, Dorthe; Bank, Mads (2022): "Affirmative Critique," in *Ephemera. Theory and Politics in Organizations,* Volume 22(3): 183-217.

Additional suggested readings:

Foucault, M. (1991). Questions of method. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (eds.), *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality* Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 73-86.

Foucault, M. (1998) 'On the Genealogy of Ethics'. In *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth: Essential works of Foucault 1954–1984. Vol. 1*, by Michel Foucault, pp. 253-280. London: Penguin.

Foucault, M. (2007) *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977-78*. Springer, 2007.

Foucault, M. (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Springer, 2008.

Koopman, Colin. *Genealogy as critique: Foucault and the problems of modernity*. Indiana University Press, 2013.

Raffnsøe S., Gudmand-Høyer M., Thaning M.S. (2016) Foucault's dispositive: The perspicacity of dispositive analytics in organizational research. Organization, 23(2): 272-298.

Raffnsøe, S., Gudmand-Høyer, M. T., & Thaning, M. S. (2016) Michel Foucault: A Research Companion. Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, M. (1984) 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress'. *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books, pp. 340-372.

Foucault, M (1993) About the Beginning of the Hermeneutics of the Self: Two Lectures at Dartmouth. *Political Theory*, 21(2) 198–227.

Foucault, M. (1980) 'The Confession of the Flesh'. In *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*, ed. C. Gordon, pp. 194-240. New York: Pantheon Books.

Note: In case we receive more registrations for the course than we have seats, CBS PhD students will have first priority. Remaining seats will be filled on a first come first serve.

Registration deadline and conditions

The registration deadline is **18th May 2027**. If you want to cancel your registration on the course it should be done prior to this mentioned date. By this date we determine whether we have enough registrations to run the course, or who should be offered a seat if we have received too many registrations.

If there are more seats available on the course we leave the registration open by setting a new registration deadline in order to fill remaining seats. Once you have received our acceptance/welcome letter to join the course, your registration is binding and we do not refund your course fee. The binding registration date will be the registration deadline mentioned above.

Payment methods

Make sure you choose the correct method of payment upon finalizing your registration:

CBS students:

Choose payment method ***CBS PhD students*** and the course fee will be deducted from your PhD course budget.

Students from other Danish universities:

Choose payment method ***Danish Electronic Invoice (EAN)***. Fill in your EAN number, attention and possible purchase (project) order number.

Do you not pay by EAN number please choose ***Invoice*** to pay via electronic bank payment (+71).

Students from foreign universities:

Choose payment method ***Payment Card***. Are you not able to pay by credit card please choose ***Invoice International*** to pay via bank transfer.

LINK to the course site: xxxxxxxxxxx

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