

Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 3450
Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences

Term: Winter 2014

Time: Tuesday and Thursday 4 – 5:20

Location: Rozanski 105

Class Size: 60

Instructor: Dr. Karen Houle

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Office: MacKinnon 337

Office hours: Mondays 2-3, or by appointment

1. Philosophical Description of Course

This course reads our current concepts of *health, body, medicine and disease* – mental and physical -- and their respective institutional forms in clinical medicine (physical and psychiatric) via the discourse analysis of 20th century French critical theorist, Michel Foucault (1926-1984). We will read 2 Foucauldian texts. These describe the production of the branch of ‘the life sciences’ that is modern clinical medicine in all its various manifestations. Foucault calls this ‘modern medical scientific discourse.’

These two works also plot the production of the modern individual subject *as* a being who conceives of her very subjectivity – our very sense of the *truth* of who we are and what we are - - through the lenses of biology, population norms, medicine, disease, embodiment and health. This is an epistemic issue: what can be known about ourselves, what counts as worth knowing, and what ways of knowing count as legitimate? The topics of health, medicine and disease suggest there is a lot to know, always more to know, and that this knowledge is worth pursuing. This is also relevant to the topic of ‘ethics’ because this kind of a subject, in this kind of a world, is one concerned above all with *health*, whether personal, cultural, economic, environmental or spiritual. In other words, the production of the field of modern clinical medicine is also the site of production and control of some of the most powerful modern values and our sense of meaning & legitimacy. These dominant values and meanings have found their way into other domains (education, family, religion, government).

Foucault claimed not to have written his books for a philosophical audience. Rather, he desired his books “to be a kind of tool-box others can rummage through to find a tool they can use however they wish in their own area...I write for users, not readers.” Since we are all *users* of

the concepts and the institutions of health, these texts can be tools which help us in that use, however we conceive it or experience it. Moreover, as a critical theorist, it is precisely in gaining a profound sense of our own positionality in the production of discursive fields that ethics opens up. In short: critical analysis of “the life sciences” is ethics, a form of ethical work.

This course will focus on relevant concepts Foucault developed and/or deployed – discourse, intelligibility, visibility & sayability; figures & personae; archeology & genealogy; normalization & governmentality, panopticism, power/knowledge, biopower, subjectivation, discipline, signification, force. It will expose us to his genealogical method, his ‘anti-scientific method.’ (Such as we see in I, Pierre Rivière) and to how doing genealogy is a way to become more aware, more responsive, more responsible.

At the end of the course students will be able to use these capacities and conceptual tools to gain insight into and thus critique philosophical aspects of modern health and medicine such as: hormone replacement therapy, weight loss and self-starvation, categorization of activities as Olympic sports, use of animals in laboratory testing, antidepressants, yoga, personal trainers, alleged increase in OCD in children, cosmetic surgery, reproductive/fertility technologies, fitness regimes, teeth-whitening, stem-cell anti-aging therapies, anti-smoking lobbies, UVA therapy i.e. tanning, body modification, & cancer surveillance.

2. Prerequisites, requirements

7.5 credits with 1.5 of those being Philosophy courses.

NOTE: This is a 3rd year course with very challenging material. Students without a solid background in Philosophy will not be adequately prepared.

3. Purpose, Goals and Objectives of the Course

- a) Working as individuals and as a mutually-engaged emerging collective, we will become familiar with, and able to use *some* of Foucault’s conceptual landscape and methodologies. Students often hear about Foucault but rarely have an opportunity to delve into his ideas, and to get a grip on them.
- b) We will not simply memorize & parrot these ideas of Foucault’s but try to use them to help us understand our lived reality. They are thinking-tools.
- c) We will recognize the relevance of these concepts and methodologies for critically assessing a wide range of biomedical practices most importantly those we ourselves have encountered as embodied subjects-in-process.

4. Texts or Resources Required

- a) Michel Foucault. 1994. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. (Vintage Books)
- b) Michel Foucault, editor: I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered my mother, my sister, and my brother...A Case of Parricide in the 19th century. Translated by Frank Jellinek. University of Nebraska Press, 1975.
- c) Additional readings on Course-Link. (Check regularly)

5. Organization of the Course

The course involves a combination of formal lectures by the instructor, informal discussions, some material prepared by students and presented in very short (micro-) presentations.

Note: Please check the ANNOUNCEMENTS on Courselink regularly. I make changes and updates there.

6. Evaluation

The grade for the course will be based on the following items weighted as indicated:

<i>Evaluation Point</i>	<i>% Value</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Small assignments (participation-attendance + micro-presentations + reflective prompts + take-home short assignments)	20%	On-going
Critical Summaries + Application (In-class tests)	40%	4 in total
Final Exam (comprehensive)	40%	TBA

{**Late Policy:** Any work to be handed in by a particular date and time will be docked 20% per day, or 1/5 of the total possible mark. These are worth 10%. That means that after 5 days late, you would get a zero. If you have medical, compassionate or non-insane reasons for not being able to get an assignment in on time, communicate with the instructor **before** the assignment is due.}

Note on 'small assignment' portion of your grade. [20%]

I keep track of attendance and contribution each and every class.

Students are expected to attend every class, actively participate in discussion, draw on insights offered by peers to extend a line of discussion, ask good questions and listen carefully. Students must *demonstrate* via participation (including the reflective prompts and micro-presentations) that they have been paying attention in class and have read the required course readings in full, not just the first page or the summaries on Wikipedia or Spark Notes. Often reflective prompts will be drawn from one class discussion and asked at the beginning of next. If you miss a class you will not be able to get oriented to the question!

Please note: Students in 3450 are not being asked to do any extra-curricular *contributions* such as on-line moderated discussions, or seminar slots. You contribute to, and gain from, this class *in* the classroom time and space assigned, 3 x a week for 12 weeks. That's it, that's all.

Arriving late, leaving early, using cellphones, texting, surfing the net, chatting on Skype or Facebook, or any other non-course related use of electronic devices will result in penalties to your participation grade and/or expulsion from the room or being moved. I will sometimes ask you to close your laptop and just listen, or take notes the old-fashioned way.

If you come to class without having done the readings, or even tried to, or you just read the first 2 out of 20 assigned pages... and you shop on E-bay for speakers or purses, and watching skateboard videos, even while you are toggling

back and forth taking notes, you are not *fully present and participating*. In fact, you are quite likely interfering with others' capacity to be actively involved in the class including the instructor's! And: you will not be able to do very well on any of the short assignments. So keep up on the readings, and come prepared.

b) Critical Summaries of Reading Excerpts + Application to Current Issues [40%]

Foucault's writing is really a challenge. It is frilly, obtuse and repetitive. And, it is in translation from French. Certain terms he uses in French to make an important distinction – *la connaissance* vs. *le savoir* – simply get mushed together in English as *knowledge*. There is an overwhelming amount of detail, especially about obscure moments during and following the French Revolution! And the detail can easily obscure his exceptionally fantastic, philosophically-trenchant ideas, ideas relevant to today's world and your lives. Yet, it is crucial to practice dealing with the text on its own terms, because Foucault is doing it on purpose to help us to learn something about how we think and read! And moreover, drawing out these ideas, trying to really understand what is being said, & putting these ideas in dialogue with other philosophical insights and questions. Be active! The critical summaries are designed to get you to work closely with interpreting passages from I, Pierre Riviere and The Birth of the Clinic. At four points in the course everyone will be given the same short passage. You will be asked to explain the passage, explain the concepts used, lay out the claim, and state its larger significance in light of a concrete, practical matter with which you will be familiar. Each of these will be graded out of /10.

These will be in-class. They can be open book. I will provide examples of critical summaries I have assigned in the past, and successful examples of student work. Please, if you don't understand the text or the lectures, come and talk with me. Don't leave it hoping it will improve on its own. It likely won't and you'll do poorly on these in-class tests. Come talk to me.

c). Final Exam [40%]. Will cover material from the whole course, and the application of these ideas to current issues in the life sciences. This has a take-home and an in-class portion. Date: TBA

Schedule of Topics and Readings (subject to change)

Topics covered in each week of the course are presented below. It is your responsibility to check CourseLink regularly to see updated versions of this schedule, with the topics and page #'s filled in. If you miss classes, it is your responsibility to check where we are at in the topics and schedule. Announcements and handouts are made in class and not always repeated on Courselink.

Michel Foucault. 1994. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. (Vintage Books) = **BoC**

Michel Foucault: I, Pierre Rivière, having slaughtered.... = **I,P**

Date	Topic or Themes	Readings
Week 1	Course Organization ARCHIVE, CRITIQUE, CRITICAL THEORY	<i>Foreword</i> I, P
Week 2	DISCOURSE, INTELLIGIBILITY, SAYABILITY & VISIBILITY	3-122, I,P.
Week 3		

	POWER-KNOWLEDGE, SUBJECTIFICATION	122-212, I,P
Week 4	TEST #1	212-269, I,P
Week 5	Visible:Invisible, Spatialization and Verbalization	Birth of the Clinic: Introduction (for Monday); then Ch. 1 (“Spaces and Classes”)
Week 6	The new object: the <i>healthy man</i> Normal: abnormal Light (visibility) + Liberty Test #2	Ch. 2: “A Political Consciousness” and Ch. 3, “The Free Field” The test will be on Friday and covers up to the end of Ch. 3 (Might also draw on <u>L. Pierre Riviere</u>)
Week 7	Winter Break/Reading Break	
Week 8	Social Contract Clinical tests	Chapter 4 “The Old Age of the Clinic” & Ch. 5 “The Lesson of the Hospitals”
Week 9	Signs/Symptoms/Signification	Ch. 6 “Signs and Cases”; Ch. 7, “Seeing and Knowing” .
Week 10		Ch. 8, “Open up a Few Corpses”,
Week11	TEST #3	Ch. 9 “The Visible and Invisible”, Conclusion The test will be on Friday and covers the remainder of B of C
Week 12		Additional Readings
Week 13 April	Last week of classes, TEST #4	Additional Readings
April		Final Exam

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

E-mail communication

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> email account regularly: email is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When you cannot meet a course requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and

email contact. [See the Undergraduate Calendar](#) for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration.

Drop date

The last date to drop one-semester Winter 2014 courses, without academic penalty, is *Friday, March 7, 2014*. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, [see the Undergraduate Calendar](#).

Copies of all work.

Keep all your marked work. There may be a discrepancy in our tallies at the end of term, and you need to be able to show me you did that work.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities which, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are [detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar](#).

Academic misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community—faculty, staff, and students—to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is [detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar](#).

Recording of materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The [Undergraduate Calendar](#) is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or [the BA Counseling Office](#).