

Department of Philosophy
Philosophy 3450 SYLLABUS
Ethical Issues in the Life Sciences
DRAFT

Term: Winter 2011
Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays 10-11:20
Location: MacKinnon 223
Class Size: 60

Instructor: Dr. Karen Houle
Khoule@uoguelph.ca
Office: MacKinnon 337
Office hours: Wednesdays 9:30 - 11:30 am, or by appointment

1. Brief Description of Course:

This course reads the concepts of health, medicine and disease – and their respective institutionalizations -- via the discourse analysis of critical theorist, Michel Foucault (1926-1984). Foucault “refused to identify himself as a philosopher, historian, structuralist, or Marxist...and he preferred not to claim that he was presenting a coherent and timeless block of knowledge; he rather 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 don’t write for an audience, I write for users, not readers.” In that spirit, in the first half of the course we will focus on concepts Foucault himself developed and/or deployed – discourse, (visibility & sayability; figures & personae; archeology & genealogy), panopticism, power/knowledge, biopower, subjectivation, discipline, governmentality, force. In the second half of the course we will use these tools to help us critically investigate a number of current aspects of health and medicine: mental health, hormone replacement therapy, weight loss and self-starvation, use of animals in laboratory testing, antidepressants, yoga, personal trainers, 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, cancer surveillance and therapies, etc.

How is this in any way about “ethical issues in the life sciences”?

In one of his last interviews (1984) “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom”, we find the following exchange:

Q. You say that freedom must be practiced ethically...

M.F. Yes, for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious [*réfléchi*] practice of freedom?

If not for freedom, there would be no sense in talking about ethics. At the same time, “freedom” only takes on some kind of pertinence or intelligibility through ethics which, for Foucault, must be *practiced*. How does one practice it, and practice it *consciously*? According to Foucault (and modeled by him, not just recommended as highbrow theory) through critique. What is critique? It is actively developing “a sharpened sense of reality... a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off familiar ways of thought and to look at the same things in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental.” In this course, using Foucault’s concepts and method of analysis, we can take an interest in current “life science” norms *as if* they are entirely strange subject matters, not normal, natural, sensible or inevitable. We will even temporarily “invert” these truths.

What does *that* accomplish? Foucault believed that, in fact, it *accomplishes the ethical*. ”

The subject matter of one’s own life is given through historical fields of discourses distributed across and circulating through social multiplicities—institutions like medicine, family, science, education. Foucault remarked, in the latter years of his life: “I am now interested in *how* the subject constitutes itself in an *active* fashion through practices of the self, these practices are nevertheless not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed on him by his culture, his society, and his social group.”

Medicine, health, disease are not givens, but are imposed on us by our culture, our society, our social group. However, active, engaged, critique of that very “culture” in which we find ourselves, and are constituted as subjects in certain ways, is how we can actively fashion ourselves; is tantamount to a pushback against passive constitution.

From a Foucauldian perspective, this work, in fact, makes it possible to believe in, or hope for, or open space for, what has not yet happened or even been thought. Critique of the reality in which one finds oneself, here and now, *is* the practice of freedom: is ethics.

2. 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 learn, apply and parrot these ideas of Foucault's but be critical of their limits and shortcomings.
- c) We will recognize the relevance of these concepts and methodologies for critically assessing a range of medical practices most importantly those we ourselves have encountered as embodied subjects.

3. Texts or Resources Required:

1. Michel Foucault. 1994. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archeology of Medical Perception*. Translated by A. M. Sheridan Smith. (Vintage Books)
2. *Foucault: Health and Medicine*. 1997. Alan Petersen and Robin Bunton, Eds. (Routledge)
3. Several additional articles will be provided by email attachments and/or linked on D2L
4. Some articles may be circulated by students in conjunction with their in-class presentations

Organization of the Course

The course involves a combination of formal lectures by the instructor, discussions, material presented by students in the latter half of the course.

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>
Class participation (attendance + reflective prompts + contribution)	20%	Each class
Critical Summaries (written, handed in at start of class)	30%	3 in total
In-class 10-minute presentation in groups of 5-(includes discussion questions, annotated bibliography, with 5 additional sources, one-page guide for classmates)	10%	Feb. 14-April 4th
Final Exam	40%	April 11th

Note: This evaluation scheme may be altered based on consultation with course participants during the first session of the course on January 11, 2011.

Late Policy: Critical summaries will be docked 2% per day. They 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.

1. Participation [20%]

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) 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. Often the 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, 2 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. If you come to class without having done the readings, and you shop on E-bay for speakers or purses, even while you are toggling back and forth taking notes, you are in no way *participating*. In fact, you are quite likely interfering with others' capacity to be actively involved in the class including the instructor's!

The table below presents a general guide to the evaluation of class participation used in this course.

Evaluation criteria for participation	Grades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●1 Degrees of absenteeism and associated lack of contribution. This includes during presentations. 	0-8
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●1 Present, not disruptive. ●2 Tries to respond when called on but does not offer very much. ●3 Very infrequent involvement in discussion, by commentary and/or body language. 	10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●1 Demonstrates adequate preparation in comments and reflective prompts: knows basic case or reading facts, but does not show evidence of trying to interpret or analyze them. ●2 Offers straightforward exegesis (e.g., straight from the reading), without elaboration or very infrequently (perhaps once a month). ●3 Does not offer to contribute to discussion, but contributes to a moderate degree when called on. ●4 Sporadic involvement. ●5 Speaks too frequently trying to demonstrate erudition, rather than build upon insights in play. ●6 Disruptive interventions that go off on tangents, take up time, or repeat what has already been said. 	12-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●1 Demonstrates good preparation: knows subject or reading well, has thought through implications of them. ●2 Offers interpretations and analysis of material (more than just facts) to class and in reflective prompts. ●3 Contributes well to discussion in an ongoing way: responds to other students' points, thinks through own points, questions others in a constructive way, offers and supports suggestions that may be counter to the majority opinion. ●4 Willing to go out on a limb, either by risking an interpretation or offering a novel insight. ●5 Demonstrates consistent ongoing involvement (active listening and speaking) 	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●6 Demonstrates excellent preparation: has analyzed case, issue, etc. exceptionally well, relating it to readings and other material (e.g., readings, course material, discussions, experiences, etc.). ●7 Offers analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of material, e.g., puts together pieces of the discussion to develop new approaches that take the class further. ●8 Contributes in a very significant way to ongoing discussion: keeps analysis focused, carefully and respectfully responds to other students' comments, contributes to the cooperative argument building, suggests alternative ways of approaching material and helps class analyze which approaches are appropriate, etc. ●9 Responds to others in classroom by name and works with their points, respectfully. ●10 Demonstrates ongoing very active involvement. 	18-20

[criteria adapted from Maznevski, Martha L. (2007) *Grading Class Participation*. Teaching Resources Center, University of Virginia: Charlottesville]

2 Critical Summaries [30%]

Foucault's writing is really a challenge. It is frilly, obtuse and repetitive. And, it is in translation. Certain terms he uses in French to make an important distinction – *la connaissance* vs. *le savoir* – simply get mashed 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. Yet, it is crucial to practice drawing out these ideas, trying to really understand what is being said, & putting these ideas in dialogue with other philosophical insights and questions. The critical summaries are designed to get you to work

closely with interpreting passages from The Birth of the Clinic. At three points in the first half of the course everyone will be given the same passage. You will be asked to explain the passage, explain the concepts used, lay out the claim, and state its larger significance. Each of these will be graded out of /10.

3. In-class Presentations [10%]

Starting in the second half of the course, as we move into the “application” section, students will be required to generate topics of interest, do some reading of secondary sources on these topics, produce an annotated bibliography, and do a very short (10 minute) presentation to the class on the topic à la Foucault. Students can work in groups of 5. Not everyone has to stand up front and talk. This is an exercise in digging up topics of interest, guiding us toward resources, identifying key issues, doing some very preliminary assessment, and sharing these with the rest of the class.

A sign-up sheet will go up in the 2nd week of classes on Houle’s office door.

4. **Final Exam** [30%]. Will cover material from the whole course, and draw on in-class presentations.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

The following list of lecture topics and readings is subject to change. Topics covered in each week of the course are presented below. It is your responsibility to check on D2L regularly to see updated versions of this schedule, with the presentations and readings 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 D2L.

Date	Topic	Readings
11, 13 Jan	Course Organization	Armstrong, “Foucault and the Sociology of Health and Illness” (pp. 15-30) in <u>Foucault: Health and Medicine</u> (hereafter <u>FHM</u>)
	“Discourse”	Preface to <u>The Birth of the Clinic</u> , pp. ix-xix) *hereafter <u>BoC</u>
18, 20	“Discourse” <i>Archeology & Genealogy</i>	Chapters 1, 2, 3 of <u>B of C</u> *NB: Your first critical summary will be handed out on the 18 th and due on the 20 th .
25, 27	“Discourse” <i>Visibility (The Gaze) & Invisibility...Sayability (The Statement) and Unsayability</i>	Chapters 4 & 5, & 9 nb
1, 3 Feb	Signs: Signified/Signifier	Chapters 6 & 7 * Second Critical summary handed out on 1 st and due on 3 rd .
Feb 8	Class cancelled	
10 Feb	Power/Knowledge	Ch. 8 + “Two Lectures” + “Truth & Power” in <u>Power/Knowledge</u>
15,17	Subject/Subjectification (Figures and Personae)	Ch. 10. & Conclusion + “What is an Author?” * Third critical summary handed out on 15 th and due on 17 th .
21 Feb	Winter Break	
1, 3 Mar		
8, 10		

15 Mar
17 Mar Houle away: Guest Lecture
22, 24
29, 31
5 April
11 April Final Exam, 8:30 -10:30 am

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 e-mail contact. It isn't in your best interests to not communicate! See the undergraduate calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Winter '11** courses, without academic penalty, is **Friday March 11th**. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

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:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Note: If, in any other class, you are covering some of the same material or texts, you cannot submit the same writing to two classes, even a part of it, without the permission of the instructors. We have access to class lists.

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. It can be found at:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>