

CARLETON UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Public Affairs Department of Law and Legal Studies

**LAWS 6002 – Law, Regulation and Governance
Winter 2014**

A SEMINAR ON BIOPOLITICS

Instructor: Sheryl Hamilton
Course Time: Thursdays 11:35 am – 2:25 pm
Location: LA B249
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Office Hours: Mondays 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m.

Course Description

“Biopolitics is a strange term” Jodi Dean asserts in a 2010 essay in *Krisis* (2). She is signaling the contemporary proliferation of the notion of biopolitics through an incredibly wide range of social science and humanities writing. The term is used differently by different authors, and sometimes in conflicting ways. This course takes as a starting premise that biopolitics is a concept worth having in one’s intellectual toolbox and aims to assist students in sorting out its intricacies, engagements and critiques.

While the relationship between life and politics has a much longer intellectual history, most of the work specifically taking up ‘biopolitics’ is indebted to the ideas of Michel Foucault. In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* (1986) and in several lectures given at the Collège de France in the 1970s (Foucault, 2003), Foucault offers the notion of biopower to demarcate a field of rationalized governmental activity beginning at the end of the eighteenth century whereby vital characteristics of human life – health, reproduction, death, sexuality, and so on – are brought within regimes of power and governance. Individual human beings are not the objects of governance, but rather their biological features, which can then be measured and aggregated at the level of population.

Foucault’s ideas have been applied, extended and critiqued in the ensuing decades by authors such as Giorgio Agamben, Nikolas Rose, Gilles Deleuze, Donna Haraway, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Achielle Mbembe, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, and Roberto Esposito, among others.

This turn to a new episteme of political rationality focused on the regulation and distribution of forms of life has implications for issues as diverse as euthanasia, genetic modification and biotechnology, environmentalism, international human rights, pregnancy and abortion, queer subjectivity, incarceration and war, terror and torture, and more.

Learning Objectives

This seminar is intended as an advanced introduction to the concept of biopolitics mobilized through a collaborative close reading of a number of influential book-length works and key writings. Students will be encouraged to bring their own interests, previous reading, and research interests to the course. The seminar will only work if there is a very high level of engagement, commitment and collaboration on the part of everyone in the course.

Students will gain familiarity with the notion of biopolitics, central threads in its theorization, key critiques of those approaches, and instances of its analytical application.

Course Materials

We will read and work through the following:

- Lemke, Thomas (2011), *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*, New York and London: New York University Press.
- Selections from the work of Michel Foucault.
- Rose, Nikolas (2007), *The Politics of Life Itself: Biomedicine, Power, and Subjectivity in the Twenty-First Century*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press.
- Ticineto Clough, Patricia and Craig Willse (eds.) (2011), *Beyond Biopolitics: Essays on the Governance of Life and Death*, Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Students should order the books online and I will provide electronic copies of the selections from Foucault's work.

Evaluation

This course will operate as a seminar. As in all graduate seminars, students are expected to participate thoughtfully in the discussions through posing questions, offering examples, sharing experiences as relevant, and critically analyzing the readings. However, additionally, the structure of this seminar will require that students act as teachers to their colleagues, attempt to make connections across disparate positions and literatures, and recognize differences in approach with respect and engagement. The classroom dynamic and success of the seminar will depend upon both the collaborative and independent work of all of us.

Evaluation in the course will be as follows: classroom engagement and discussion 30%; two reading responses 20% (10% each); an outline of the final paper 10%; and a final paper 40%.

Engagement and Discussion

Students will be evaluated on the quality of their engagement and discussion in the seminar. Engagement includes having done the assigned readings every week, being prepared to discuss them in an informed manner, providing constructive feedback to colleagues, engaging with the

ideas of others, making interventions to facilitate and support the production of group knowledge, asking questions, and listening to colleagues with attention and respect. Please note that quantity of intervention alone does not make for a high quality of engagement. Quality of discussion involves the demonstration of critical analytic skills and theorized analysis, the provision of appropriate examples, the ability to effectively compare and contrast ideas, and the capacity to diagnose the strengths and limits of a text's arguments and claims. Quality discussion in a seminar is an outcome of the generosity, thoughtfulness, preparation, creativity, and risk-taking of its participants.

Reading Response

Each student will prepare two critical reading responses of 5-7 pages each over the course of the term based upon one week's reading(s). These will be due at the beginning of the class where those readings will be taken up. They should critically analyze the readings with reference to other readings, discussion, and the student's own engagement, rather than outside research.

Final Paper

Each student will write a final research essay which should be an application of the notion of biopolitics to a phenomenon, issue or case study of her or his choice or a theoretical engagement with a line of thinking emerging out of the debates on biopolitics. Papers should be appropriately 20-25 pages long and are due on April 17th, 2013.

Academic Integrity and Plagiarism

All assignments that you complete must be your original work. Please review the student Academic Integrity Policy <http://www2.carleton.ca/studentaffairs/academic-integrity>. You are responsible for conduct in accordance with the policy.

Students Requiring Formal Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request the processes are as follows:

Pregnancy obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Religious obligation: write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the Equity Services website: <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: The **Paul Menton Centre** for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or pmc@carleton.ca for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your *Letter of*

Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (*if applicable*). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (*if applicable*) at <http://www2.carleton.ca/pmc/new-and-current-students/dates-and-deadlines/>

You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://www2.carleton.ca/equity/>

Other Special Needs

If you have any other special needs which require scheduling accommodation for you to maximize your learning experience (e.g. employment, childcare, travel, etc.) and for which formal accommodations are not available, please speak to me at the beginning of term so that we can arrange a mutually satisfactory approach.

Course Schedule

January 9	Introduction
January 16	Professor away at conference – class cancelled
January 23	Lemke, pp. 1-123
January 30	Selections from Foucault: Society Must Be Defended and Security, Territory, Population, Birth of Biopolitics and History of Sexuality
February 6	Selections from Foucault II: Society Must Be Defended and Security, Territory, Population, Birth of Biopolitics and History of Sexuality
February 13	Selections from Foucault III: Society Must Be Defended and Security, Territory, Population, Birth of Biopolitics and History of Sexuality
February 20	Spring Break
February 27	Rose, Chapters 1-4
March 6	Rose, Chapters 5-8 (Coda optional)
March 13	Ticineto Clough and Willse, Introduction and Part I
March 20	Ticineto Clough and Willse, Part II

March 27 Ticineto Clough and Willse, Part III

March 31 Ticineto Clough and Willse, Part IV

Wrap up event to be schedule collectively.

Papers due April 17, 2013