

CENTRE FOR POLITICAL STUDIES
SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
MONSOON SEMESTER 2021

M.PHIL. OPTIONAL COURSE: PO 640

COURSE TITLE: **BODY, POWER, KNOWLEDGE: INTRODUCTION TO BIOPOLITICS**

INSTRUCTOR: DR RAJARSHI DASGUPTA

Credits 4

Scheme of Evaluation: 2 Mid-semester assignments and end-semester examination

Social science scholarship has of late turned to 'biopolitics'. The term broadly refers to exercises of power that govern the life of a population, in a continuous and permanent manner, where 'population' is produced by institutional mechanisms of control and exclusion. The turn to biopolitics offers a critique of the concept of liberal state as guarantor of rights, which shares an idea of sovereignty that goes back to Hobbes. Sovereignty is seen to lie in the head of state that organizes individuals and institutions in terms of natural bodies and an artificial body politic in the Hobbesian tradition. The biopolitical thus studies the effects of power on human bodies under capitalism, moving away from a model of 'consciousness', to institutions like prison, to conditions like concentration camps, and to forms of life rendered abject without politics. A different body of multitude emerges here, which sheds new light on the rationality of governance, also referred to as governmentality, and the investment of certain forms of scientific knowledge in exercising domination. Such a perspective widens the ambit of political and deepens the sense of economic, by creating a new field to study the forms of subjection in the capitalist order.

To follow these shifts we need to engage with historical and empirical studies as well as theoretical formulations that are critical in framing biopolitics. The course aims to do this by taking up centrally two thinkers, Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben, although other philosophers, critics and commentators are referred to outline the biopolitical perspective. The emerging insights are tested against a number of case studies dealing with non-European and the Indian context in particular, while students are introduced to the major critiques of Foucault and Agamben's work. In the process, the course takes up the discussion of critique as a practice and philosophical tradition with regard to the study of biopolitics. The course thus extends the analysis of neoliberal capitalism beyond political economy into other areas that mark the close interface of society and state apparatuses. The category of state as a result will open up to questions of power at work in different levels, for instance, with regard to practical fields like public policy and development planning. Thus, bringing together recent political theorizing and their implications for empirical studies in politics, the course is expected to throw up new research agendas and critical insights that are valuable for an understanding of Indian experiences.

(Readings in bold are to be treated as essential readings)

Theme 1

BODY POLITIC

The readings under this theme are meant to introduce the conceptual correlation of body and body politic in political philosophy, extending from mediaeval political theology to Hobbes, as a background for the biopolitical perspective.

1. Selections from E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study of Mediaeval Political Theology*, 1957.
2. Selections from Hobbes, *Leviathan*: Chapter XVI, *Of Persons, Authors and Things Personated*, Chapter XVII, *Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a COMMON-WEALTH*, and Chapter XVIII, *Of the Rights of Sovereignes by Institution*.
3. Michel Foucault, 'Body/Power' in Colin Gordon ed. *Power/Knowledge, Selected Interviews and other Writings 1972-1977*.
4. Anthony Synnott, 'Tomb, Temple, Machine and Self: The Social Construction of the Body', *The British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 43, No. 1, Mar. 1992.

Supplementary Reading

Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power. From Hobbes to Foucault*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1996.

Katherine Bootle Attie, 'Re-membering the Body Politic: Hobbes and the Construction of Civic Immortality', *ELH*, Volume 75, Number 3, Fall 2008, pp. 497-530

Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle, and the Experimental Life*, 1985.

Warren Montag, 'The Body of the Multitude' in *Bodies, Masses, Power. Spinoza and his Contemporaries*, Verso, 1999.

Selections from A. Parel ed. M.K. Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj and Other Writings*, 1997

Theme 2

BODY/POWER

This segment introduces students to the early writings of Michel Foucault dealing with the shift in the exercise of juridical power and how power is inscribed on the body in modern disciplinary regimes. Supplementary readings offer Indian cases to illustrate ways of engaging the biopolitical framework.

1. Foucault, 'The Body of the Condemned' in Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 1984.
2. 'Docile Bodies' in Paul Rabinow ed., *The Foucault Reader*, 1984.

3. **The Panopticon**, in Foucault, *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 1995, pp. 195-228.
4. Foucault, 'Psychiatric Power' in D Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol.1

Supplementary Reading

Nicholas B. Dirks, 'The Body of Caste: Anthropology and the Criminalization of Caste' in *Castes of Mind, Colonialism and the Making of Modern India*, Delhi, 2002. Selections from Gopal Guru ed., *Humiliation: Claims and Contexts*, 2009.

Parama Ray, "Meat-Eating, Masculinity, and Renunciation: A Gandhian Grammar of Diet" *Gender & History*, 14. 1, April 2002.

Josheph S. Alter, 'The Body of One Color; Indian Wrestling, the Indian State, and Utopian Somatics', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 8, no.1, Feb. 1993, pp. 49-72.

Caroline Walker Bynum, 'The Body of Christ in the Later Middle Ages: A Reply to Leo Steinberg' in *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion*, 1991.

Theme 3

BIOPOLITICS 1: GOVERNMENTALITY

This segment introduces students to later writings of Michel Foucault elaborating the concept of governmentality and how it converges with biopolitical practices in the late capitalist system.

1. 'Right of Death and Power over Life' in Rabinow ed., *Foucault Reader*, 1984.
2. 'Governmentality' in James D Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954 -1984*, vol. 3.
3. 'The Birth of Biopolitics' in Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 1
4. 'Security, Territory, and Population' in Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, vol. 1.

Supplementary Reading

Thomas Lemke, "The Birth of Bio-Politics" - Michel Foucault's Lecture at the Collège de France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality, in: *Economy & Society*, Vol 30. No. 2, 2001, pp. 190-207.

Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: An Introduction' in Graham Burchell et al eds., *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, University of Chicago Press, 1991.

Foucault, Lecture Eleven, 17 March 1976, 'Society Must Be Defended', Lectures at the College De France, 1975-76.

David Scott, 'Colonial Governmentality', *Social Text*, 1995.

Theme 4

BIOPOLITICS 2: STATE OF EXCEPTION

Readings under this theme familiarizes students with the writings of Giorgio Agamben, especially the notion of 'bare life' and the 'camp' as a paradigm of modernity. Supplementary readings explore the insights of Agamben in relation to other major writings on statelessness as a modern condition.

1. 'Form-of-Life', 'Beyond Human Rights', 'What Is a People?' and 'What Is a Camp?' in Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End, Notes on Politics*, trans, V. Binetti and C. Casarino, 2000.
2. Selections from Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 1998.
3. Selections from Agamben, *State of Exception*, 2005.
4. Carl Schmitt, Chapter 3: Political Theology in *Political Theology*.

Supplementary Reading

K. Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', 1844

Walter Benjamin, 'Critique of Violence', *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, 1986
 Hannah Arendt, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man", 1951.

Selections from Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz, The Witness and the Archive*, 1999

Agamben, 'We Refugees' translated by Michael Rocke, 1994.

Theme 5

FIELDS OF BIOPOLITICS

This segment discusses select case studies from the non-European and Indian contexts in order to explore how the biopolitical perspective can be productively engaged from locations altogether different from what has been addressed by Foucault and Agamben.

1. Introduction by Jean Paul Satre in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1961.
2. Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', *Public Culture* 15(1), 2003
3. Selections from Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World*, 2004.
4. Udaya Kumar, 'Self, body and inner sense: Some reflections on Sree Narayana Guru and Kumaran Asan', *Studies in History*, 13, 2, n.s., 1997.
5. Selections from Joseph S. Alter, *Gandhi's Body: Sex, Diet, and the Politics of Nationalism*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000.
6. Selections from Ujjwal Kumar Singh, *The state, democracy and anti-terror laws in India*, 2007.

Supplementary Reading

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Foucault and Najibullah' in *Other Asias*, Blackwell, 2008.

Aniket Jaaware, 'Eating, and Eating with the Dalit: A Re-Consideration Touching upon Marathi Poetry', in Saccidanandan ed., *Indian poetry, modernism and after: a seminar*, Delhi, 2001.

Baidik Bhattacharya, 'Public penology: postcolonial biopolitics and a death in Alipur Central Jail, Calcutta', *Postcolonial Studies*, 12:1, 7-28, 2009.

Bimol Akojam, 'Another 9/11, Another Act of Terror: The Embedded Disorder of the AFSPA', in Sarai Reader 05: Bare Acts, CSDS, 2005, Delhi.

Theme 6

CRITIQUE AS PRACTICE

Before we take up the critiques of Foucault and Agamben's work, it is necessary to introduce students to the philosophical practice of critique and its centrality to the Enlightenment tradition. The readings in this segment aim to do this along with a discussion of Foucault's contribution to critique as radical practice.

1. Immanuel Kant, 'What Is Enlightenment?'
2. Michel Foucault, 'What Is Enlightenment?' in Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol. 1, Ethics*.
3. Michel Foucault, 'Kant on Enlightenment and Revolution', trans., Colin Gordon, *Economy and Society* 15. no. 1, 1986: 96.
4. 'Intellectuals and Power' in Donald F. Bouchard ed., *Michel Foucault, Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*.

Supplementary Reading

'Truth and Power' in Faubion ed., *Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol. 3, Power*.

Judith Butler, 'What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue', David Ingram, ed., *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, London: Basil Blackwell, 2002.

Thomas Lemke, 'Foucault, Governmentality, and Critique', Paper presented at the *Rethinking Marxism Conference*, University of Amherst (MA), September 21-24, 2000.

"I am sure that you are more pessimistic than I am . . ." : An Interview with Giorgio Agamben, *Rethinking Marxism*, vol. 16 no. 2, April 2004.

Giorgio Agamben, 'The Time that is Left', *Epoché*, Volume 7, Issue 1, Fall 2002, ISSN 1085-1968, pp. 1-14, 2002.

Gilles Deleuze, 'Foldings, or the Inside of Thought (Subjectivation)', in *Foucault*, 1988

Theme 7

CRITIQUE OF BIOPOLITICS 1

This segment takes up the major philosophical critiques of Michel Foucault's work and the debates and responses that have followed in their wake.

1. Jurgen Habermas, 'The Critique of Reason as an Unmasking of the Human Sciences: Michel Foucault', and, 'Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again', in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, 1987.
2. Nancy Fraser, 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', *Ethics* 96, no. 1, 1985.
3. Charles Taylor, 'Foucault on Freedom and Truth', *Political Theory*, 13 August 1985, pp. 377-385.
4. William E. Connolly, 'Taylor, Foucault, and Otherness', *Political Theory*, 13 August 1985, pp. 377-385.

Supplementary Readings

Bradley J. Macdonald, 'Marx, Foucault, Genealogy', *Polity* * Volume XXXIV, Number 3 * Spring 2002

James Schmidt and Thomas E. Wartenburg, 'Foucault's Enlightenment: Critique, Revolution and the Fashioning of the Self', in Michael Kelly ed., *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, MIT Press, 1994.

Theme 8

CRITIQUE OF BIOPOLITICS 2

The readings in this section deals with the major critiques of Agamben's work and the ensuing debates.

1. Andrew Norris, 'Giorgio Agamben and the Politics of the Living Dead', *Diacritics*, Vol. 30, No. 4, Winter, 2000, pp. 38-58
2. Jacques Ranciere, 'Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103, 2/3 (2004): 297-310.
3. Thomas Lemke, "'A Zone of Indistinction" - A Critique of Giorgio Agamben's Concept of Biopolitics', www.thomaslemkeweb.de/engl.%20texte/A%20Zone3.pdf
4. Philippe Mesnard, 'The Political Philosophy of Giorgio Agamben: A Critical Evaluation', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, Vol. 5, No. 1, Summer 2004, pp. 139-157

Supplementary Readings

Malcolm Bull, 'Vectors of the Biopolitical', *New Left Review*, 45, May-June 2007.

Mika Ojakangas, 'Impossible Dialogue on Bio-power: Agamben and Foucault', *Foucault Studies*, No 2, pp. 5-28, May 2005

Additional Readings for the Course

Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy*, 2008.

Julian Reid, *The Biopolitics of the War on Terror: Life struggles, liberal modernity, and the defence of logistical societies*, Manchester and New York, 2006.

Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864*, 1995.

Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule*, University of California Press, 2002

Saskia Sassen, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*, Columbia University Press, 1996.

N. Rose, 'The politics of life itself', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 18(6), 1-30, 2001.

Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, 'Biopower Today', *BioSocieties* 1(2):195-217, 2006

Richard Rorty. *Foucault and Epistemology* in Hoy, D (eds) 'Foucault: A critical reader' Basil Blackwell. Oxford, 1986

Maurice Blanchot, Michel Foucault as I imagine him, in *Foucault/Blanchot*, 1987.

Miriam Ticktin, 'Policing and Humanitarianism in France: Immigration and the Turn to Law as State of Exception', *Interventions*, Vol. 7(3): *Practices of Migration*, 2005.

G. Deleuze, 'Postscript on the societies of control', *October*, 59, 1-7, 1992.

Agamben, 'On security and terror' *Theory and Event*, 5(4), 2001.

(http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/theory_and_event/toc/archive.html#5.4)

Noel O'Sullivan, 'Difference and the Concept of the Political in Contemporary Political Philosophy', *Political Studies*, 1997, XLV, 739-754.

Martha Kaplan, 'Panopticon in Poona: An Essay on Foucault and Colonialism', *Cultural Anthropology* 10(1), 1995, pp 85-98.

Ananya Vajpeyi, *Prolegomena to the Study of People and Places in Violent India*, WISCOMP Perspectives 26, 2007.

Ranabir Samaddar, *Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India 1947-2000*, 2003.

Ashwini Tambe, "Gandhi's Fallen Sisters: Moral Hygiene in Public Sphere Participation", *Social Scientist*, vol. 37, nos. 1-2, January-February 2009.

Mukul Kumar, "Relationship of Caste and Crime in Colonial India: A Discourse Analysis", *Economic and Political Weekly*, March 6, 2004.

Mrinalini Sinha, *Colonial Masculinity: The 'Manly Englishman' and the 'Effeminate Bengali' in the Late Nineteenth Century*, 1995.

David Arnold, *Colonizing the Body: State Medicine and Epidemic Disease in Nineteenth-Century, India*, University of California Press, 1993.

Gyan Prakash, *Another Reason: Science and the Imagination of Modern India*, 1999.

Willem van Schendel, "Stateless in South Asia: The Making of the India-Bangladesh Enclaves", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 61, No. 1, (Feb., 2002), pp. 115-147
Meenakshi Thapan, *Living the Body: Embodiment, Womanhood and Identity in Contemporary India*, Sage, 2009,
An Analysis of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958.
(<http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Law/2005/afspa.htm>.)

***Please note that the course content is intended for a regular one semester course (four months). If there are changes in the duration of the semester, corresponding modifications will be applied with reference to the topics, class lectures and readings.**