

Eng 727/MedHist 919/HistSci 919	Professors Sara Guyer and Richard Keller
Graduate Seminar	guyer@wisc.edu , rckeller@wisc.edu
University Club Building, Room 313	Office Hours: by appointment
Wednesdays 1:15-3:15 pm	

Biopolitics

According to the philosopher and historian Michel Foucault, in the late-eighteenth century, governments began recognize populations, health, sanitation, sexuality, and race as their domain and to marshal power through the management of human bodies. More recently, the emergence of stem cells, health care, hunger, and human rights, as major political issues reflects the ongoing centrality of biological life for politics. This course will examine this convergence through a rigorous consideration of the theory of biopolitics and its cross-disciplinary application. We will focus on work in philosophy and literature, but also anthropology, sociology, and history. Topics will include Biological Citizenship; Biopoetics; Hunger, Food, and Obesity; Biomedicine and subjectivity; and Biogitimacy, among others.

Students are required to participate in an active and informed manner during weekly discussions, and will be required to lead at least one discussion during the semester. Written work consists of ten short responses (2 pp.) to weekly readings (due the morning of the discussion). In addition, students are required to write a conference-length (~10 pp.) original paper on a topic related to the course's central themes, and to present that paper at a conference to be held at the Center for the Humanities at the end of the semester.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, we urge any student with a disability to inform me as soon as possible, so that I may make any necessary accommodations to ensure full participation and facilitate educational accessibility. All such requests are confidential.

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with UW policies on plagiarism and to assume full responsibility for academic integrity in all coursework.

Books

Required books will be available at the UW bookstore.

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*

Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*

João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*

Philippe Bourgois, *Righteous Dopefiend*

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*

Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*

Didier Fassin, *An Empire of Trauma: An Inquiry into the Condition of Victimhood*

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*

Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl*

Paul Rabinow, *French DNA*

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Meeting Schedule

20 January— Introductions

27 January—Shaping the context

Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Chapters 6,7, and 9 (L@UW)

Barbara Johnson, "Apostrophe, Animation, and Abortion." *Diacritics* 16: 1 (1986), pp. 28-47. (L@UW)

Nikolas Rose and Carlos Novas, "Biological Citizenship,"
<http://www2.lse.ac.uk/sociology/pdf/RoseandNovasBiologicalCitizenship2002.pdf> (and L@UW)

3 February— Foucault and the beginnings of biopolitics

Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*

_____. "Right of Death and Power over Life," *The Foucault Reader*, ed. by Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon, 1984), 258-72.

10 February—Technesis and digital bodies

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

Mark Hansen, "'Not thus, after all, would life be given': Technesis, Technology, and the Parody of Romantic Poetics in *Frankenstein*" (L@UW) and/or other essays TBD.
Guest Seminar Leader: Mark Hansen

17 February—Developing biopolitics

Roberto Esposito, *Bíos: Biopolitics and Philosophy*

24 February—Thanatopolitics?

Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer*

3 March—Modes of Survival

Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?*

Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15 (2003): 11-40. (L@UW)

Lauren Berlant, "Slow Death," *Critical Inquiry* 33 (Summer 2007): 754-80. (L@UW)

Paper topic due in class.

10 March—Health, development, and the state

Amartya Sen, "More than 100 Million Women are Missing," *New York Review of Books*, 20 December 1990.
<http://ucAtlas.ucsc.edu/gender/Sen100M.html>

Emma Tarlo, "Body and Space in a Time of Crisis: Sterilization and Resettlement during the Emergency in Delhi," in *Violence and Subjectivity*, ed. by Veena Das et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 242-70. (L@UW)

Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "The Global Traffic in Human Organs" and commentary, *Current Anthropology* 41, no. 2 (2000): 191-224. (L@UW)

Optional reading: Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

17 March—Life in a dead language

João Biehl, *Vita: Life in a Zone of Social Abandonment*

24 March—Globalization and risk

Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).

31 March—NO MEETING: SPRING BREAK

7 April—Biogitimacy

Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman, *An Empire of Trauma*

Peter Redfield, "Doctors, Borders and Life in Crisis," *Cultural Anthropology* 20 (2005): 328-61. (L@UW)

Paper draft due 9 April

14 April—Even in America?

Philippe Bourgois, *Righteous Dopefiend*

21 April—Fictions of Survival

Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*

28 April—Bioprospecting

Paul Rabinow, *French DNA*

Rebecca Skloot, "Taking the Least of You," *New York Times Magazine* (16 April 2006) (L@UW)

5 May—Conclusions

Reading TBA

Final paper due 15 May

Events of Interest:

February 18, 4pm: Kelly Moore, "Making a National Body: Neoliberalism and U.S. Federal Nutrition Policy." (University Club, 313)

March 10, 7.30pm: Catherine Malabou, "Is Plasticity Another Name for Freedom?" (Chazen Museum of Art, L160)

March 22, Catherine Mills, Title and Time TBA (University Club, 313)

April 12, 4pm: Steven Epstein, "Discussing the Undiscussable" (University Club, 313)

April 28, 7.30pm: Paola Antonelli (MOMA), Title TBA, Chazen Museum of Art, L160)