

FROM “SECURITY SOCIETIES” TO (NEO)LIBERALISM

FOUCAULT, THE MODERN INTERNATIONAL AND WORLD POLITICS

Foucault Doctoral Workshop

January 15th-16th, 2014

IMEC, Caen, France

The Association for the *Centre Michel Foucault* with the support of the *Fondation de France*, organizes a doctoral workshop that will bring together PhD candidates whose work derives *from*, or who work *on* Michel Foucault's work.

As during previous years, the purpose is to connect young scholars in a pleasant and relatively informal way in order to constitute an international research network.

This year, the theme of the Doctoral workshop will be: *From 'security societies' to '(neo)liberalism. Foucault, the modern international and world politics*. It will build on a previous session co-organized with the Instituto de Relações Internacionais, University PUC-Rio (IRI/PUC-Rio, Brazil) on September 25th-27th in Rio de Janeiro.

OVERALL PRESENTATION

The relationship between Foucault and the domain of knowledge nowadays associated with the so-called discipline of “International Relations” (IR) is, to say the least, a peculiar one. Between the end of the 1970s and the mid-1990s, the work of Michel Foucault heavily contributed to nourish and substantiate a radical critique of the onto-epistemological assumptions of the mainstream theories of IR. Such critique has not yet been grounded on the set of works in which Foucault gets the closest to this “domain of knowledge” (we especially refer to the last lessons from the *Security, Territory, Population* series), but on what a certain Anglo-Saxon tradition had come to characterize as the “first Foucault”.

Such a critique – now particularly associated with the names of R.B.J. Walker, Michael Shapiro, Richard Ashley, William Connolly, Nicholas Onuf, Michael Dillon, David Campbell and James Der Derian – found in the Foucault of *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge* the arguments to introduce the necessity to study discursive practices into the study of “international politics”. The theoretical options developed by these authors worked within a pluralist ontology, insisting on multiplicity instead of unity, difference instead of identity, heterogeneity instead of homogeneity.

From an epistemological point of view, the archaeo-genealogical mood that was progressively being articulated in the “IR discipline” enabled to question the universalistic assumptions of epistemic realism that had, that far, dominated theories of International Relations (Shapiro & Der Derian, 1989; Ashley & Walker, 1990; Der Derian, 1995). Hence, it became possible to shed light upon the historical practices that contributed to the construction of what we have come to call the State, sovereignty, and the International (Bartelson, 1995), and also diplomacy (Der Derian, 1987; Constantinou, 1996), foreign policy (Campbell, 1998), or security (Der Derian, 1993; Dillon, 1996). All of these started being stressed as historical practices made invisible by an unproblematized use of these concepts that, in the discipline, had been able to work as *givens (impensés)*.

Such “critical” literature resulted into a (at least partial) genealogy of the discipline itself (Ashley, 1987; Walker, 1993). Hence, it not only allowed to raise questions about how the study of “international relations” had been historically constituted as a specific domain of knowledge within an academic discipline, but also to highlight how these theories of IR were more an expression of a particular and historically situated spatial and political imaginary than the explanations of world

politics they purported to be. The “critical turn” contributed, therefore, to establish the historically contingent character of the discipline itself.

Hadn't Michel Foucault initiated this very task in his lessons on March 22nd and 29th 1978 at the Collège de France in the *Security, Territory, Population* series while discussing the idea of Europe as it emerged at the turn of the XVIIIth Century, and suggesting the transition from the right of the sovereign to a “physics of States”? In doing so, hadn't Foucault paved the way for an authentic archaeo-genealogy of the discipline of IR in which the idea of a “balance of power” have played such a crucial role? Why doesn't Foucault ever refer to IR theory? Such questions are further underlined by the fact that it is difficult to imagine that Foucault ignored this domain of knowledge that, despite having been instituted mainly outside of France, counts with intellectuals such as Raymond Aron and Pierre Hassner, who were already considered as the two main French names in the study of “international relations”.

In return, these questions call attention to those who, today, in IR, repeatedly evoke concepts such as governmentality and biopolitics without ever (to our knowledge) referring to these two lessons. At the time of the “critical turn”, *Security, Territory, Population* wasn't available, either in French or in English. Only some recordings of Foucault's lectures have circulated among restricted circles. Hence, it is of no surprise that no one had interrogated Michel Foucault's strange silence on the theories of “international relations”. However, this is no longer the case, now that *Security, Territory, Population* has been available in French for almost ten years, and in English for almost seven.

Taking these considerations as a starting point, the participants of this doctoral workshop propose to (1) interrogate this relation of mutual ignorance; (2) work towards a genealogy of the discipline of International Relations; (3) explore how the works of Foucault on security, liberalism, and, more importantly, the art of governing, can help to think in novel ways what the theories of International Relations have progressively come to build as their object of study: “international politics” and the role of the state within it.

MODALITIES OF PARTICIPATION

The doctoral workshop will take place on **January 15th and 16th 2014 at IMEC, in the Abbaye d'Ardenne close to Caen** ([link](#), with a departure from Paris early morning on the 15th and a return in Paris early evening on the 16th). Both English and French will be used during the workshop.

On-site housing and catering costs as well as return train tickets Paris/Caen will be paid for by the Association pour le Centre Michel Foucault.

In order for discussions to be the most fruitful possible and because housing capacities are limited at the Abbey, the number of participants has been set to 10, which will inevitably imply a selection of applicants.

PhD students who participated to the workshops the previous years are welcome to submit, but we will consider new applicants in priority, as well as those whose proposals had not been selected for the previous encounters.

Proposals (one page at most), focusing either on a particular question of your PhD work or on a specific methodological issue, **should be sent either in French or in English before December 15th, 2013. A response will be given before December 22nd** and preliminary program will circulate on December 30th.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for any question or for further information:

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With our very best wishes,

The Association pour le Centre Michel Foucault