

CALL FOR PAPERS

READING *DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH***ON FRIDAY, MAY 24TH, 2024, IN PARIS**A *FOUCAULT: 40 YEARS AFTER* ACTIVITY ORGANIZED
BY FLORIAN MEIER AND SAMU/ELLE STRIEWSKI

In his 1978 lecture, entitled “Qu’est-ce-que la critique?,” Foucault defines critique as an “art of voluntary inservitude, of reflective indocility” (Foucault 1997c, 47). This art or “critical attitude” can be interpreted as a form of historical erudition which takes into account subjugated knowledges (“*savoirs assujetés*”) and tries to envisage “self-transformation” by the “techniques of the self” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 7, 2016, p. 203; see also Allen, 2008, p. 2). Or, more literally, focusing on the “reflective indocility”, it can also be understood as a “becoming reflexive” of power relations. In this latter case, an individual or collective praxis of resistance, a critical attitude emerges in the forms of subjectivation and is the impetus for critical or “genealogical” thinking (Färber, 2022, p.114; Harcourt, 2022a, 2022b).

Even though Foucault never offered a more general account of *theory and praxis*, his genealogical research has to be understood as a fragmentary theory of a praxis of resistance, a tracing of possible practices of resistance in the knowledge-power systems of his time, an essay to bridge the gap between historical research and resistance. This can also be observed in his engagement in activist groups like the “Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons” (2003; Elden, 2017, p.129ff; Harcourt, 2015, p. 1462f). One reason why Foucault never offered a more general account of his theory of political practice might be that he did not want to provide an ahistorical, or transcendental justification of his critical analytics of power or his own critical attitude. Thus, as he puts it, genealogies can only offer “tools” (Foucault, 1997b, p. 208) for a certain historical context, a certain present but not a general theory for matching the broken tile of theory and praxis in political institutions like communist parties or reformist programs. It rather seems to be the case that every present has to find and create its own “normative force” (Lorenzini, 2020, p. 15) to intervene in the political discourse of its own time. Nonetheless, as critical thinkers, we can learn from reading Foucault, and from those who criticized him (e.g., queerfeminist or post-colonial critiques).

This outlined immanent tension will guide us through our activity: a reading and discussion group of one of Michel Foucault’s most famous texts, *Discipline and Punish*. We will meet online for three sessions: at 8pm (Central European Time) *on the Mondays, 22nd April, 6th May, and 20th May, 2024*. These reading group meetings are part of the GRCCCT (Graduate Research Colloquium on Contemporary Critical Thought), affiliated with the CCCCT at Columbia University in NYC. Bernard Harcourt will join us for the final, hybrid conference in Paris *on Friday, May 24th*.

On that day, we will further explore the relation of praxis and theory one can deduce based on this account and reconsider the dis/continuities between the historical socio-economic and political conditions shaping the emergence of the book and our present situation. Both shall help us to identify what relevance Foucault's thinking still has for today's practices of resistance.

We welcome abstracts of approx. 200 words for panel contributions, preferably in person, that further investigate the above-mentioned topics. The approaches to the text could, for instance, be from the fields of intellectual history, political science, social and feminist philosophy, legal theory, critical race theory, postcolonial and/or queer studies. We are also glad to receive expressions of interest by abolitionist activists, lawyers, social workers, and other people engaged in praxis. Please send your abstract along with a short bio (50 words) to samu.elle.striewski@fu-berlin.de and florian.meier@ehess.fr prior to **March 24th, 2024**. You will hear back from us within two weeks.

Cited Works

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- Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons (2003). *Le Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons : Archives d'une lutte, 1970 - 1972*, edited by P. Artières. Éd. de l'IMEC.
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- Harcourt, B. E. (2022a). *Critique and Praxis*. Columbia University Press.
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