

PHILO 380.86 Foucault:

Professor Linda Martín Alcoff – Spring 2016

Michel Foucault was one of the most important and influential philosophers of the last half of the 20th century and his prescient diagnosis of neo-liberalism, bio-power, and the security state are more relevant than ever. In general, Foucault's work provides a new analysis of the modern forms of social oppression and an original account of the ways in which power circulates through knowledge systems. He offered a serious challenge to the way we conceptualize liberation, freedom, truth, and subjectivity. Foucault was not merely a critic but also an activist with a powerful sense of the open-ended possibilities for social transformation.

This course will provide an extensive analysis of Michel Foucault's works. A major question we will pursue is how to understand his claim that modern societies are characterized less by freedom and autonomy than by discipline and docility. We will also look carefully at his claim that there is a constitutive relationship between knowledge and power. And we will cover in some depth his analysis of sexuality and the construction of sexual identities.