

## **A Century of Foucault (and fifty years of *Histoire de Sexualité*) – Program**

8<sup>th</sup> September 2026 (AEST) at Deakin Downtown

### **10:30 – 10:45 Welcome and Introductions**

#### **10:45 – 12:15 Graduate Panel 1**

Will Pan, *Power and Ideology; Foucault and Althusser. On the inherent contradiction between subject and structure*

Isaac Price-Kelly, *On Foucault's 1953-1954 Psychological Causality Lectures*

Cristian González Arévalo (online), *Voluntary Submission and the Aesthetics of Form: Foucault, Robbe-Grillet, and the Creative Reconfiguration of Power*

### **12:15 – 1:00 Lunch (catered)**

#### **1:00 – 2:30 Short Panel Session on the 'Legacy of Foucault'**

Introductions by Lauren Pedersen-Hor

Dr. Christopher O'Neill (Monash University)

Dr. Fiona Druitt (University of Melbourne)

Dr. Lachlan Ross (University of Melbourne)

### **2:30 – 2:45 Break (catered)**

#### **2:45 – 4:15 Graduate Panel 2**

Max Hoddinott, *How to Talk about Human Rights in Occupied Iraq*

Ashlee Wilson, *Pastoral Power and the Production of the Anticipatory Reproductive Subject*

Joel Duggan, *Dude Where's My Dole? Governmentality in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century welfare state*

### **4:30 Drinks at Hightail Bar**

\* The order of presentations in each panel may differ from what is listed above.

## **Presenters & Presentations**

### **Will Pan (Deakin University)**

#### ***Power and Ideology; Foucault and Althusser. On the inherent contradiction between subject and structure***

French (post)structuralism by large is committed to two theses.

1. There exists an all-encompassing omnipresent social structure (Ideology, Discursive, etc.).
2. Members of society, as subjects are all subjected to this inescapable structure through some form of a social mechanism (interpellation, inculcation, power).

These two theses are posited and repositied by many notable French (post)structuralist thinkers, Claude Levi-Strauss, Pierre Bourdieu, but perhaps none more notable than Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser. The theory of Ideology and the theory of power are both strongly influential for philosophers and social theorists committed to analysing subvert forms of structural oppression.

In this paper, I conduct a symptomatic reading of both Foucault and Althusser. Which means that although the arguments of the texts will be considered and analysed, I will primarily focus on what the text omits or to use a Freudian term – represses. I present a “homology”, between Foucault’s theory of structure and power, and Althusser’s theory of Ideology and Interpellation. I will demonstrate that there is an inherent contradiction in both of their theories of structure and subject.

*Will is a masters student at Deakin University in Philosophy. He graduated his honors and currently tutors at the University of Melbourne. Will is primarily interested in the question of Ideology in the Marxist and Psychoanalytic Tradition.*

### **Isaac Price- Kelly (Deakin University)**

#### ***On Foucault’s 1953-1954 Psychological Causality Lectures***

In the early 1950s, Foucault taught a number of classes on psychology as well as working in the field of mental health in more practical ways. Although there has been a recent resurgence in interest in this period of Foucault’s work, little attention has been paid to the lectures he gave on psychology. Here I will give an overview of these lectures and their context, establish the sources from which Foucault drew for these lessons, and outline the major themes and points of interest found in this work. I will draw from Foucault’s reading notes and manuscripts, the notes taken by students at his lectures, and the existing body of scholarly literature. The aim is to provide an introduction and orientation to an aspect of Foucault’s work that appears promising as an area for future study, but has yet to be fruitfully explored.

*Isaac Price-Kelly (any pronouns) is a doctoral student at Deakin University, studying the concept of textuality in Michel Foucault’s 1960s works.*

### **Cristian González Arévalo (University of Freiburg)**

#### ***Voluntary Submission and the Aesthetics of Form: Foucault, Robbe-Grillet, and the Creative Reconfiguration of Power***

This paper examines voluntary submission as a crucial yet under-theorised problem in Michel Foucault's legacy. While Foucault's analyses of power have often been read through the lenses of discipline, governmentality, resistance, and critique, less attention has been paid to the ways in which subjects actively bind themselves to relations of power and participate in the formation of their own subjection. Against readings that reduce submission either to domination or to simple consent, this paper argues that voluntary submission should be understood as an aesthetic-performative practice of self-formation. The argument proceeds by rethinking aesthetics beyond the philosophy of beauty or the theory of art. Drawing on Foucault's writings on visibility, painting, and the aesthetics of existence, aesthetics is approached here as the organisation of sensibility: the configuration of bodies, gestures, gazes, scenes, and forms of experience. From this perspective, voluntary submission appears not as passivity, but as a situated practice through which subjects expose themselves, assume constraints, and transform power relations from within. The paper then stages a dialogue between Foucault's reflections on S/M, theories of performativity, and the literary aesthetics of Alain Robbe-Grillet. Robbe-Grillet's *nouveau roman*, with its suspension of psychological interiority, moral explanation, and stable narrative meaning, offers a model for thinking form as a device that produces experience rather than merely represents it. This model helps clarify Foucault's claim that S/M can function as a "creative enterprise": not because it liberates a hidden sexual truth, but because it invents scenes in which power, pleasure, obedience, and resistance become visible, reversible, and available for transformation. By linking voluntary submission to aesthetic form, this paper proposes a renewed reading of Foucault's legacy: one in which freedom is not opposed to self-binding, but emerges through historically situated practices that reorganise the very conditions of subjectivation.

*Cristian González Arévalo is an Argentine legal scholar specialising in the philosophy of law. He is currently pursuing PhDs in Philosophy at the University of Freiburg and in Law at the University of Buenos Aires. His work focuses on Michel Foucault's thought, critical theory and contemporary French philosophy, with particular attention to questions of power, resistance and subjectivation in legal and political contexts. He has undertaken research stays at Université Paris 8 and at the Michel Foucault Archives, and has presented his work at conferences in Europe and the United States.*

**Max Hoddinott (University of New South Wales)**

### ***How to Talk about Human Rights in Occupied Iraq***

In scholarly accounts of the 2003–04 occupation of Iraq, human rights and neoliberalism are overwhelmingly treated as independent phenomena, resulting in two largely autonomous literatures: one concerned with the question, "What is the nature of the relationship between the occupying powers and human rights?", and the other with the question, "On what grounds is the occupation properly described as neoliberal?". This paper proceeds from the premise that this bifurcation is a mistake. Drawing upon conceptual resources from texts such as *The Birth of Biopolitics* and *The History of Sexuality*, as well as more recent contributions in philosophy, political theory, and intellectual history, this paper argues in favour of a methodological shift away from the dominant left-cosmopolitan and Marxist treatments of the human rights/neoliberalism relationship in the context of the Iraq occupation. Turning instead toward a Foucauldian tradition which homes in upon the functions and effects of discourse, the paper argues in favour of conceptualising the occupation as having been contoured by a neoliberal rationality, and in turn for situating the occupiers' rhetoric within an established—albeit diffuse, fractured, and often improvisational—tradition of neoliberal human rights.

*Max Hoddinott is a third-year PhD candidate in philosophy at the University of New South Wales. His research focuses on the politics of human rights discourse in the context of the 2003–04 occupation of Iraq, with a particular emphasis on questions of neoliberalism, legitimacy, and power. He previously completed an MA at UNSW on the topic of labour human rights.*

**Ashlee Wilson (Deakin University)**

***Pastoral Power and the Production of the Anticipatory Reproductive Subject***

Michel Foucault's concept of biopower has become central to analyses of reproduction but I think that his account of pastoral power offers a richer framework for understanding contemporary reproductive governance. I will examine how reproductive governance increasingly operates through 'pastoral' relations that encourage women to assume responsibility for the health of future children. Rather than relying solely on prohibition or coercion, power functions by creating self-governing subjects who monitor and regulate their own conduct in anticipation of uncertain reproductive futures.

Drawing on Foucault's account of pastoral power as an individualising and caring form of governance, I argue that women are produced as anticipatory reproductive subjects whose moral obligation is to optimise future maternal and foetal outcomes. Medical advice and public health interventions encourage continual self-surveillance and confession, positioning reproductive responsibility as an ethical duty rather than an external demand. Although these practices appear benevolent, they simultaneously expand the reach of governance into intimate aspects of everyday life whilst obscuring the structural conditions that shape reproductive decision making.

By examining contemporary reproductive governance through the lens of pastoral power, I will demonstrate the continued relevance of Foucault's work for understanding how reproductive subjects are produced and through responsibility and self-government.

*Ashlee Wilson is a PhD Candidate in Philosophy at Deakin University. Her research examines reproductive governance and the ways the possibility of reproduction shapes women's lives long before pregnancy through emerging understandings of epigenetics, public health, and biopolitics. Drawing on feminist political philosophy and feminist bioethics, her work explores how reproductive responsibility is increasingly extended across the life course, reshaping ideas of autonomy and bodily governance.*

**Joel Duggan (University of Melbourne)**

***Dude Where's My Dole? Governmentality in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century welfare state***

In recent Australian history, economic policymaking has taken an almost uniquely "rational" form. Yet, Australia entered the 20th century as the democratic laboratory of the world. Drawing upon the Hegelianism of the British idealists, the state was conceived as constituent in human flourishing, an idea ultimately leading to the birth of the world's first "living wage." By the end of the 20th century, any such notion was lost. What Michael Pusey called "economic rationalism" had taken hold, and all politics since has taken place in its shadow.

What the Australian case represents is a paradigm shift in governmentality, unique in the sense that we went from among the most aspirational of nation-building states to among the most

rigidly positivist. Putting Foucault in dialogue with Weber and Wolin, I argue that since the 1980s, governance in Australia has come to exemplify a pastoral power that subordinates social welfare policy to the imperatives of modern Staatsräson. I pose that the uneasy tension (or harmony?) between this pastoral power and the founding social-liberal ideas of Australia's welfare state is pivotal to any theory attempting to understand three recent policy crises in Robodebt, the mutual obligations system and the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

*Joel is a writer and honours student researching in political theory at the University of Melbourne. He has written for Arena, The Conversation and Farrago, and he blogs at pseudrealism on Substack.*