‘Power would no longer be dealing simply with legal subjects over whom the ultimate domination was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access event to the body’

–Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1

“...‘biopolitics’ signifies from the start a conceptual complexity that is in keeping with real tensions between the simultaneous promotion of individual freedom and the justification of coercive strategies in liberal societies.”


This course will investigate conceptualizations of life and death, power and subjectivity, and space and place enabled by scholarly work on “biopolitics.” Coined by Foucault, the concept of biopolitics has been taken up as potentially useful for understanding contemporary formations of power, identity, and spatialities, including the politics of national borders and refugee movements, public health and reproductive health, and even of the notion of “population.” This course will survey key pieces by Foucault and those engaging with his work theoretically, as well as empirical work in political and critical geographies; urban studies; feminist and gender studies; science studies and environmental politics; and related fields. The critical questions driving the course are: How can the concept of biopolitics inform our research? How has it been understood and critiqued – and used in empirical work? What are its strengths, its weaknesses, and its limits? The first half of the semester’s readings will be set by the instructor; then, based on graduate students’ interests and input, and a bibliography created by the instructor, the class will plan readings for the second half of the course.

This course has three aims:

- To survey perspectives on biopolitics, especially those that have been influential within critical geography, including research on the topics of (but not limited to) health, security, emergent diseases, terrorism, borders, refugees, violence, medical technologies, human reproduction, animal-human relationships, education, environmental politics, ethics of care, sexuality, etc.;
- To become acquainted with critical debates around power and spatialities within these perspectives, and their relation to theoretical terms/fields such as neoliberalism,
necropolitics, critical race theory & postcolonial theory, subjectivity, intersectionality, hegemony, ideology, resistance, affect, gender, sexuality, population, the environment, and the urban.

➢ To consider how theorizations and applications of biopolitics have their own geographies (their own conceptual maps, as well as their particular geographies of emergence), and how these shape their production, reception, and translation in activist and academic practice.

To achieve these aims, we will read both recent scholarship on and in biopolitics and the biopolitical, as well as foundational texts from Foucault. Critical points of debate include the meaning and significance of ‘class’ and ‘the economy’ in politics; the relations between social movements and the state; understandings of social movements through the notion of representation vs. constitution, ideology vs. culture, discourse vs. framing; and ways of thinking about identity, collectivities, and agency.

This course is a seminar: Graduate students will be expected to read thoughtfully, deepen their engagement with the literatures through responsive writing and discussion, and build their own critical perspectives on the theories addressed. Assessment will stress preparation for class, participation in discussion, and engagement as made evident in written and oral practice. Students will write not only critical response pieces throughout the semester, but also work on longer essays using the course material to advance their own research.

READINGS will be available online, at electronic course reserve, on the course D2L site, and/or online. You may want to purchase the two books from which large portions are excerpted: The History of Sexuality, part 1, and Security, Territory, Population. (NOT YET! NOT FINALIZED!!) I strongly recommend printing the readings, as you will need them in class discussion, and underlining on the page is a useful practice. If you really prefer to use a digital copy only, you must download and save it to your device head of time for easy access in class (do not depend on an internet connection in class, and time spent online in class will detract from your engagement during our face-to-face time).

All UWM course policies apply; please be familiar with the following:
Student Rights & Responsibilities: http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/SecU/SyllabusLinks.pdf

For scholars, academic integrity is of the utmost importance, and you should conduct your scholarly practice in such a way as to acknowledge the intellectual labor of others. For the relevant UWM policy, see http://www4.uwm.edu/acad_aff/policy/academicmisconduct.cfm

Please check your university email regularly for occasional class announcements; such announcements will also be posted on the course D2L page. In case of an H1N1 outbreak, severe weather events, or other disruptive large-scale phenomena, alternative arrangements will be made for class and a new syllabus will be distributed to organize the completion of remaining assessed work.

To request an office appointment or ask a quick question by email, always include “GEOG 905” in the subject header. I usually answer my e-mail within 48 hours. --Kristin

Sziarto, GEOG 905: Biopolitics, Fall 2016 – DRAFT as of June 2016
### ASSESSMENT

Your work in this course will be assessed as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment</th>
<th>Learning Goals</th>
<th>% of grade</th>
<th>Grading basis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Response papers (10 papers @ 1 p each) | Develop critical understanding of concepts and methods in poststructuralist & critical geography through independent reading and writing  
Develop scholarly analytical and writing skills | 10 papers @ 2% each for a total of 20% | Out of 2 points  
(2= meets at least 80% of criteria; 1= meets <80% of criteria; 0=not submitted) | 20% |  
Letter                                                                 |
| Class participation, including leading class discussion for 2 sessions | Develop facility and self-confidence in scholarly debate and engagement with peers | 20% |  | 5% | Out of 5 points |
| Final paper(s): DRAFT | Develop scholarly writing skills, including working with critique | 5% |  | 5% | Out of 5 points |
| Final paper: PEER REVIEW | Develop scholarly engagement through reading, develop familiarity with critical review processes | 5% |  | 5% | Out of 5 points |
| Final paper(s): FINAL version | Demonstrate ability to synthesize insights from materials covered in class and identify new research questions relevant to the themes of discussion in this course  
Develop independent research skills and deep engagement with an case study or area of theoretical inquiry  
Demonstrate writing and analytical skills appropriate to graduate level | 50% |  |  |  
Letter |

### RESPONSE PAPERS ASSIGNMENT

One of your tasks as a researcher/scholar is to develop your thinking, especially critical thinking. One of the most important ways to do this is through writing. This does NOT mean that you read a lot, think critically, then write about it. Rather, writing practice may actually start to tell you what you are thinking. To this end, in this course you will write at least 10 responses to the readings. You should write an approximately one-page, single-spaced piece (about 250-300 words) in response to the assigned reading(s), and circulate it to the entire class by posting it to that week’s folder in the D2L Dropbox by 6 pm on the Monday before class. Earlier is better – but better late than missing...
I recommend you use this assignment to work toward several different goals:

- Establishing a habitual process of writing (as thinking)
- Developing your ability to respond critically to reading
  - grasping the arguments even as you subject them to critical scrutiny
  - relating them to other scholarly work
- Getting around writer’s block by free-writing before you are sure of your argument
- Developing arguments through responding to & revising your writing

What should you strive to do in these response pieces? You might, depending on the reading(s), focus on a particular term, and trace how the author develops her/his argument about that concept, OR how several authors use different conceptualizations of the same term (and think about which conceptualization works best for you). You might focus on grappling with one or two difficult concepts or passages by trying to summarize them, and relating them to the rest of the work. You might relate a reading to a previous week’s reading(s), by comparing and contrasting their approaches to a topic.

REMINDER: Response pieces are due to the course D2L Discussion page by Tuesday, 6 pm, to give everyone time to read them before Wednesday’s class. See the instructions on that page regarding how to post your response paper. Earlier is fine, too (perhaps Monday night would be good). If your work schedule makes this impossible in some way, talk with Kristin as soon as possible.

Resources on writing as thinking:
http://www.insidehighered.com/advice/summer/summer6
http://www.capella.edu/writingcenter/overview.aspx

LEADING DISCUSSION

You will work with one or more other classmates to facilitate discussion twice in the semester. This work will count as part of your participation grade. At the first class meeting you will sign up for your two sessions. How should you go about this? There are many ways to approach the readings, and your plans should take the nature of the readings, and the questions they raise, into consideration. Some readings will clearly lay out a theoretical approach (more or less clearly, which you may need to address). Some readings will obviously conflict with others. Some readings could work best when put into conversation with readings from previous weeks.

You should also consider the practicalities of the 4:30 – 7:10 pm time. It is unlikely that we will all be able to focus on one singular task for the entire class period.

I strongly recommend that you arrange to meet with your co-facilitators at least a day or two before class. Also consider arranging to meet with me. I will generally be available to meet Monday or Tuesday afternoons (please e-mail to make specific arrangements).

FINAL PAPER ASSIGNMENT

You should use this course, and especially the final paper assignment, to further your graduate research project in some way. You may be building your preliminary reading lists, or writing your thesis or final master’s paper, or writing your dissertation proposal, or writing an
article…..Therefore, I expect you to take one of these options for the final paper, and tailor it to your needs.

Option 1: A review of literature, 20-25 pages. If you are working toward your preliminary exams, or writing your thesis, this might be what you need most. A long review of literature, in which you explore and critique several themes in a literature, or use multiple literatures to set up a framework for research, is an important task early in any research project.

Option 2: An analytical essay or position paper, 20-25 pages. If you are working on a final master’s paper, or on an article to submit for publication, this might be the best choice. In this assignment you would explicate the relevant literature in a short review, then apply and/or critique that literature, possibly through the analysis of your research findings.

Option 3: Two essays exploring particular debates in the literatures addressed in the course, each 12 pages. This might be another good route if you are preparing for preliminary exams, and wish to explore (for example) debates around conceptualizations of ‘discourse,’ or delve deeper into debates around a particular spatiality….

Option 4: A research proposal, 20-25 pages. Again, whether this option is appropriate depends on at what stage you are in your research project.

This assignment will proceed in several stages. First, by September (?) you should submit a proposal (1/2 to 1 page) for the paper(s) to Kristin via the D2L Dropbox. This part of the assignment is not for credit, but is crucial to your successful accomplishment of the later stages. Also, I recommend you discuss this assignment, and its role in furthering your academic project, with your adviser around the time you write the proposal.

Second, you will write a full draft of the paper(s) for Kristin and a peer to review. See the course calendar on the last page of the syllabus for due dates.

Third, you will review at least one classmate’s draft paper (details TBA, depending on topics). You will write up your constructive criticism, answering these questions: Is the argument clear? How can it be clarified? Is it developed throughout the paper, and in relation to research findings (depending on which kind of paper)? Are relevant literatures addressed? What is the paper’s intellectual contribution and significance, in terms of theory and/or empirical work? And so on. WHY are we doing peer reviewing? Because scholarship is a collective endeavor, involving conversations (proximate, or at a distance) and debates about knowledge production. Peer review is an important part of this endeavor.

The final version of the paper is due to the D2L Dropbox. (Deadline TBA)
SCHEDULE AND READINGS, WEEK BY WEEK

Week 1: What does “biopolitics” mean? What do we do with this idea?

Required reading:


Suggested reading:


Week 2: Biopower in depth

Required reading:


Suggested reading:


**Week 3: (bio)power and space**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested:**


**Week 4: What did Foucault say about biopower? In his own words**

**Required reading:**

Selections from The History of Sexuality, Part 1.

**Suggested:**


**Week 5: In Foucault’s own words, part 2**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested:**

http://ineteconomics.org/ideas-papers/collections/a-symposium-on-neoliberalism
Week 6: What is neoliberalism, and what does it have to do with biopolitics?

Required reading:


Suggested:


Week 7: What’s urban about biopolitics?

Required reading:


Suggested:


**Week 8: Necropolitics**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested:**


**Week 9: Are current biopolitical regimes built on racism?**

**Required reading:**


**Suggested:**


**TBD weeks 10-11 and 13-15:**
The readings for rest of the semester are yet to be determined. I have grouped a mass of relevant readings by theme. We will need to decide the rest of our readings; these sets grouped by theme are meant to be resources. We can choose from these, choose some of these and change them a bit, or look for other things to add or substitute. Let’s discuss...See “Thematic sets of readings” on p. 15 of this syllabus draft.

**Week 10:** TBD

**Week 11:** TBD

***Sunday, November 20: DRAFT of paper due to the appropriate Dropbox folder.***

**Week 12:** Peer reviewing of papers

Required reading: your peers’ draft papers, as assigned.

**Week 13:** TBD

**Week 14:** TBD

**Week 15:** TBD

**Week 16:** Final paper due.
### COURSE CALENDAR, including related events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Leaders/facilitators</th>
<th>Due dates</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6-Sep</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>13-Sep</td>
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<td>PROPOSAL for paper(s) DUE to Dropbox by noon, Sept.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>20-Sep</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>27-Sep</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>4-Oct</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>11-Oct</td>
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<td>(If you are doing the 2-paper option, full draft of paper #1 due to D2L Dropbox by midnight, Sunday, March 4th)</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>18-Oct</td>
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<td>25-Oct</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>15-Nov</td>
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<td>DRAFT of paper DUE to peer reviewer and Kristin by Sunday, 20 November, midnight (e-mail AND Dropbox)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>22-Nov</td>
<td>Peer reviewing of papers</td>
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<td>6-Dec</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>13-Dec</td>
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<td>(16)</td>
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<td>Final paper due</td>
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<tr>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>27-Dec</td>
<td>Grades due</td>
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</table>
Thematic sets of readings to choose from:

**Week B: Borders, migration, refugees**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week E: Epigenetics & eugenics**

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**Required:**


**Week F: Food and biopolitics**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week H: Health & public health**

**Required:**


Suggested:


**Week M: Methodologies for biopolitical approaches**

Required:


Suggested:


**Week P: Population, neomalthusianism**

Required:


Plus choose one from “suggested” articles below –

**Suggested:**


**Week Q: Sexualities**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week 5: Security and surveillance**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week T: Totalitarian or fascist biopower**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week V: Violence and terror**

**Required:**


Suggested:


**Week W: Politics of reproduction & reproductive health**

**Required:**


**Suggested:**


**Week Z: Politics and or biopolitics**

Aren’t all politics about life and death? And where do we go from here?
Required:


Suggested:
