

# foucault studies

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EDITORIAL

## Introducing Foucault Studies

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Interest in the work of the French thinker Michel Foucault continues to develop within the English-speaking world and elsewhere at an exponential rate. There exists an ever-expanding corpus of writing which deals either directly with his work or uses his ideas as the basis for other research. Indeed, some of his concepts, notably his work on power, are now so well recognised as to often appear without attribution. Aside from being widely used at the research level, Foucault's work is also commonly referred to in university courses across the humanities and the social sciences as well as in applied professional disciplines such as education, architecture and social work. There are several research and discussion networks in existence which focus on his work, including the Centre Michel Foucault in Paris, the History of the Present groups in Canada and the UK, the Foucault Circle in the USA and a new Centro de Estudios Multidisciplinarios Michel Foucault in Mexico. In the virtual sphere, the popularity of the various Foucault websites on the internet attests to the influence of his work: the [Michel Foucault: Resources](#) site for example, averages up to 500 hits a day from all over the world. There are also two major email discussion lists which deal with his work and a number of other minor lists.

In 2004, the year that marks the twentieth anniversary of Foucault's death, his work has become more popular than ever with numerous conferences around the globe in Europe, South America and the United States, Australia and elsewhere. 2004 has also marked the publication of four previously unpublished works by Foucault in French: a set of interviews originally conducted in 1975 by Roger-Pol Droit, two new volumes of lectures and the dramatised radio broadcast of a very lengthy interview conducted by Claude Bonnefoy in 1969. A book on Manet containing a lecture by Foucault which had only appeared previously in incomplete form in an obscure journal has also been published. 2004 has also marked a remarkable revival of interest in Foucault's work in France after years of relative neglect. This has not been restricted merely to publication of new work by Foucault, but also extends to the publication of new books about his work, special issues in journals and

wide circulation magazines and newspapers, several conferences, and a special series of Foucault related events at the annual Autumn festival in Paris.

With so much activity - and ever increasing activity - around Foucault's work, a journal which deals specifically and directly with his work and its impact was more than overdue. Although there are a select number of journals which publish various kinds of research influenced by Foucault's work (as well as other French thinkers), Foucault has not been accorded the honour of a journal which provides a forum for the discussion of his work, including criticisms, developments and applications, the publication of new translations and reviews and reports of books, conferences and other activities. This sets him apart from other thinkers such as Nietzsche, Kant, Hegel, and even, now, Baudrillard, and we believe this journal is timely.

The journal intends to provide a forum for discussion of Foucault which goes beyond received orthodoxies, simplifications and uncritical appropriations. In particular, the journal aims to publish work which utilises not only the more familiar material by Foucault but also the wide range of material made available by the 1994 publication in French of a four volume collection of over 360 of Foucault's shorter writings and the more recent (and ongoing) publication of his lectures. Much of this material is still in the process of being translated into English, and it revolutionises ways of thinking about his work.

The initial submissions to the journal, a few of which appear in this first issue, testify to our belief that there was a real lacuna in the available outlets for work on Foucault. We recognised Foucault's work was being used productively across the globe and across a whole range of disciplines, and therefore sought submission of material that not only deals with his work directly but also that which critiques, updates and augments his claims across very diverse geographical, disciplinary and historical domains. In this and subsequent issues we aim to cover the full breadth of these interests, including power, politics, law, history, social and cultural theory, sexuality, race, religion, gender studies, psychoanalysis, philosophy, geography, architecture, education, health studies, management studies, media studies. Where possible, the journal will look to publish translations of shorter pieces from Foucault's *oeuvre*, and will regularly carry book reviews and conference and seminar reports.

It is important to emphasise that even if the editors have their own specialised interests, they will be seeking to make the journal as inclusive a forum as possible (in the spirit of Foucault's own work) and will be seeking contributions from across a wide range of specialisations, interests and viewpoints. We have attempted to reflect something of this breadth of interest in Foucault's work in our editorial board.

There have been concerns that a journal focused specifically on Foucault's work runs the risk of imprisoning this famously iconoclastic thinker within the strictures of a scholarly orthodoxy with rigid rules of inclusion and exclusion. In the social sciences and other applied fields, one frequently encounters researchers struggling to understand Foucault and to apply his thought while fighting an uphill battle against entrenched prejudice concerning his and other similar ideas in their own very pragmatically oriented fields. These researchers sometimes find it difficult to publish their work, which is too divergent to fit easily within the well-defined boundaries of their own disciplinary and institutional locations. One of the aims of this journal is to provide an alternative outlet for such work. The name 'Foucault' on the cover of this journal is thus an open invitation for scholars to depart from conventional disciplinary strictures while still performing their own rigorous research. Foucault's name serves here as an invitation, not the name on the door of a closed club.

In this first issue, we are very pleased to include a new translation of one of Foucault's lectures, alongside three important and challenging essays. Simon Enoch examines the construction of the Jewish subject in Nazi medical discourse and Neil Levy and Jeremy Moss, quite by coincidence working at the same institution, reflect respectively on some of the ethical and political implications of Foucault's work. They are accompanied by a review essay by Brad Elliott Stone on two of Foucault's lecture courses, and a range of reviews of other books. The last contribution here is a brief report by Richard Lynch of the work he has done on a bibliography of English translations of Foucault's work. The report explains the way in which the bibliography can be used, and provides links to the material which is freely available on the Foucault Resources website. Richard intends to keep this material up-to-date, and this journal will include brief updates where appropriate. Together we believe this first issue is a significant contribution to the ongoing reception of Foucault's work in the English-speaking world, and although contributions to the journal continue in good numbers, we also hope it will inspire future submissions.

This launch issue will be followed by twice yearly publication. There is the potential for special issues on particular topics, and suggestions for themes would be welcomed by the editors.

Two further points about the journal are worth noting. First, that the journal is available online, and is free to anyone who wishes to use it. This seems appropriate given the global reach of interest in Foucault and the wide internet usage by Foucault scholars and researchers in general. It also means that the journal is free from external constraints. Second, that the journal aspires to the same standards as print journals, and sees the internet as a valuable medium for the dissemination of high-quality rigorous work. All

articles published in *Foucault Studies* have gone through peer-review and standard editorial procedures.

Having no outside support means that the editors are necessarily indebted to a number of people. We are especially grateful to the editorial board for their advice and enthusiasm for this venture; to the numerous referees who have reviewed the work submitted to the journal and offered helpful and generous criticism; and to Morris Rabinowitz and Doris B. Katz for their invaluable technical assistance. All of these people enabled this first issue of the journal to come into existence. We hope you enjoy the material presented here.