

**FALL 2020**

**Professor: Ed Cohen**

**01:988:491 S01**

**SEM WOM/GENDR STUDYS: HOW TO READ MICHEL FOUCAULT**

**Course Description:**

The French philosopher Gilles Deleuze famously characterized Foucault's life by saying: "Only one thing mattered to Foucault: What does it mean to think?" I'd restate that as: "Only one thing mattered to Foucault: How does thinking matter?" Indeed, as Foucault himself remarked: "In what does [philosophical thought] consist if not in the endeavor to know how and to what extent it might be possible to think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known? ... The object [is] to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so to enable it to think differently." In this course we will closely read just a few of the texts Foucault wrote in the mid-1970s in order to trace the development of his thinking. We will focus on texts he wrote about public health, "abnormality," the origin of the prison, "sexuality," and modern governance in order to explore his desire to "think differently"—especially insofar as living differently always entails thinking differently as well. We might learn something about thinking along the way as well.