

## PHIL 641: Putting Life to Work. From Neoliberalism to Biocapitalism Fall 2019

Class schedule: Thursday 10 -12:50 - Room: SC 250c

Instructor: Barbara Muraca, Ph.D. ([bmuraca@uoregon.edu](mailto:bmuraca@uoregon.edu))

Office Hours: Tuesday 10-12 & upon appointment - Room: Susan Campbell Hall 232

### **Course Description**

In the seminar we will discuss some of the seminal works from different traditions of thought about what neoliberalism is and how it operates (such as Hayek, Foucault, Harvey, Brown, Dardot & Laval, Springer, Deleuze & Guattari). More specifically, we will focus on the neoliberal restructuring of society as a response to the ecological crisis of the 1970s that aimed at 'putting life to work'. Following the literature on Biocapitalism (i.a. Lazzarato, Codeluppi, Bazzicalupo, Leonardi, Fumagalli), we will analyze and explore the ways in which life in all its forms (affective, emotional, cognitive life of individuals as well as the transformative creativity of living processes beyond human life) is incorporated as main source of economic valorization. We will also analyze alternatives, subversive resistance, and pathways for a 'liberation of life'. Topics include: biopolitics, governmentality, biocapitalism, green and circular economy, biomimicry, neo-extractivism, tanatopolitics, commons, social activism.

### **Learning outcomes specific to this class:**

In this class you will learn how to:

- compare, contrast, and critique different theories on neoliberalism and biocapitalism
- apply the theories to contemporary environmental debates
- select, present, and discuss literature in class
- prepare a literature review in preparation of the research paper
- evaluate other students' project and write a review
- identify and apply criteria and requirements for paper presentations and/or publication in academic Journals
- develop an original research paper according to the above mentioned criteria

### **Class Requirements and expected workload**

**Consistent attendance, a close reading of all the texts, submitting assignments on time, and active participation during class discussions are necessary requirements for a successful completion.**

A seminar is first of all a research-oriented, reading, and writing intensive class. The reading load will be accordingly high, in order to allow students to develop a profound knowledge of the issue addressed. Each and every assignment is designed to give students the opportunity to practice academic activities, including presenting, writing an abstract and an original research papers, and completing a peer-review.

A seminar is also a class based on active participation of all students, not only in the discussions about the content, but also in proposing additional material or alternative perspectives, articulating critique and igniting debates.

You will find all important information about the class, its structure, readings, and assignments on **CANVAS**. Please make sure you know how to work with Canvas and enable receiving notifications in your settings. As a navigation guide for the class, please follow 'Modules': there you will find the class schedule week by week, materials, and a close description of the requirements for assignments.

**Disability Accommodation:** If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing special accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon as well with the AEC.

**Plagiarism and academic dishonesty will not be tolerated.** Please make sure that you know and understand exactly what plagiarism is all about BEFORE you start working on your writing assignments. If you are not sure, please contact me ahead of time.

**Land Acknowledgment:** <https://library.uoregon.edu/honoring-native-peoples-and-lands>

## Schedule and Readings

Schedule of Class	Topics and Readings	Assignments & Comments
<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction to the class</b> , reciprocal expectations, structure, & description of assignments ( <i>if you cannot attend class, please make sure that you have access to all information</i> ) Topic: <b>Capitalism and Life:</b> socio-historical background, phases of capitalism(s), approaching neoliberalism	
Readings	- Jason Moore: <i>The Capitalocene Part I+II; Capitalism in the Web of Life</i> (on Canvas) - Rosa et al: <i>Appropriation, Activation and Acceleration</i> (on Canvas) - Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello: <i>The New Spirit of Capitalism</i> (on Canvas) - Jessop: <i>Neoliberalism</i> (on Canvas) - Gorz: <i>Reclaiming Work</i>	
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>Neoliberalism: Shock Doctrine or Biopolitics?</b> Two perspectives on neoliberalism: Harvey and Foucault	<u>Contribution to discussion 1</u>
Readings	- David Harvey: <i>A brief History of Neoliberalism</i> - Michel Foucault: <i>Birth of Biopolitics</i> - Dardot/Laval: <i>The New Way of the World - Introduction</i> (on Canvas)	
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>The longer story of Biopolitics:</b> Biopower, Tanatopolitics, Necropolitics Politics over or of Life?	<u>Contribution to discussion 2</u>
Readings	- Foucault: <i>Society Must be Defended, Lecture 11</i> (17 March 1976) - Esposito: <i>Bios. Biopolitics and Philosophy</i> (selection) - Agamben: <i>The Omnibus Homo Sacer</i> (selection) - J.-A. Mbembé, Libby Meintjes: <i>Necropolitics</i> (on Canvas)	
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>Neoliberalism: Theories and Countertheories</b> Catallaxy and the Entrepreneurial Self	<b>To be rescheduled</b>
Readings	- Hayek, F: <i>Law, Legislation, and Liberty</i> (selection) - Polanyi, K: <i>The Great Transformation</i> (selection) - further comments on Hayek & neoliberal theory (on Canvas)	<u>Contribution to discussion 3</u>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Neoliberal Subjectivation</b> - The New Way of the World	<u>Contribution to discussion 4</u>
Readings	- Dardot/Laval: <i>The New Way of the World</i> - Brown, W.: <i>Undoing the Demos</i>	<u>Abstract &amp; Lit Review due</u>

Schedule of Class	Topics and Readings	Assignments & Comments
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>From Neoliberalism to Biocapitalism:</b> Putting Life to Work I cognitive and emotional capitalism: extracting affects and desire	<a href="#">Contribution to discussion 5</a>
Readings	- Lazzarato: <i>The Making of the Indebted Man</i> - Lazzarato: <i>From Capital-Labour to Capital-Life (on Canvas)</i> - Fumagalli: <i>BioCognitive Capitalism</i> - Mezzadra/Nielson: <i>On the multiple frontiers of extraction: excavating contemporary capitalism (on Canvas)</i> - further literature on biocapitalism (CANVAS)	<a href="#">Review of abstract and lit review due</a>
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Biomimcry, Biotechnologies, Neoliberal Conservation:</b> Putting Life to Work II Valorization and commodification of Life - Working WITH, not AGAINST life	<a href="#">Contribution to discussion 6</a>
Readings	- Cooper, M: <i>Life as Surplus: Biotechnology and Capitalism</i> - Fletcher, Robert: <i>selection of articles (see CANVAS)</i> - Leonardi: <i>For a Critique of neoliberal Green Economy (on Canvas)</i> - Further Readings on Canvas	
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Affirmative Biopolitics?</b> Radical Alternatives and Paths beyond Neoliberalism I	<a href="#">Contribution to discussion 7</a>
Readings	- Guattari: <i>The Three Ecologies</i> - Nail: <i>A Post-Neoliberal Eco-politics?</i> - Leonardi: <i>Ecological Crisis and Processes of Subjectivation (on Canvas)</i> - further material on CANVAS - Muraca: <i>Possibilities for Degrowth</i>	
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Affirmative Biopolitics?</b> The Power of Life - Radical Alternatives and Paths beyond Neoliberalism II	Thanksgiving
Readings	- AM Brown: <i>Emergent Strategy</i> - AM Brown: <i>Pleasure Activism</i> - Octavia Butler: <i>Xenogenesis (trilogy)</i>	<a href="#">Contribution to discussion 8</a>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Resistance and Alternatives to Neoliberalism</b> Commons, Solidarity Economy, Anarchism, Pluriverse	<a href="#">Contribution to discussion - make up option</a>
Readings	- Dardot/Laval: <i>Common</i> - Gibson-Graham: <i>Postcapitalist Politics</i> - Kothari et al.: <i>Pluriverse: A Postdevelopment Dictionary</i>	
<b>FINALS Week: Final paper/project due Dec 9 end of the day</b>		<a href="#">Final Project due</a>

## **Assignments and Grades:**

- 1) **Contributions to weekly discussion, 8 times**, once a week, to be submitted on CANVAS at the very latest on Tuesday end of the day. The contribution to weekly discussion includes a series of discussion questions about the class material and/or the suggestion of additional material that can support the discussion in class. **24% of final grade**

- 2) **Abstract of Final Project and Literature Review.** In Week 5 you are expected to submit on CANVAS a one page extended abstract (max. 600 words) of your final paper, including a literature review. The paper proposal will be peer-reviewed by other students. **15% of final grade.**
- 3) **Peer-Review of paper proposal:** right after the submission of all paper proposal you will be assigned one to review according to criteria available on CANVAS. Review must be submitted by the end of week 6 **10% of final grade**
- 4) **Final research project/ final paper** (max. 3,000 words, double spaced): evaluation of final paper includes the submission of a first draft by the end of week 9 and the consideration of feedback on the draft. **35% of final grade.**
- 5) **Presentation in class and input for class session:** you are required to take on the responsibility for one class topic and prepare a brief introduction to help discussion. Instructions about requirements will be given on CANVAS. **16% of final grade**

Participation is required and essential for completing this class successfully. Only one absence will be tolerated.

Late Assignments policy: if, *in exceptional cases that you have discussed with me*, an assignment is posted moderately late, I will accept it, but penalize it by one point down per each full day of delay. This does not apply to the weekly discussion contributions and the presentation in class!

Points roughly translate into letters according to the following table that serves as a general (not strictly mathematical) guide

Points	Grades	Points	Grades
100-95	A	76-73	C
94-90	A-	72-70	C-
89-87	B+	69-68	D+
86-83	B	67-65	D
82-80	B-	64-60	D-
79-77	C+	59-0	F