

DISCUSSION AID #2: FOUCAULT ON BIOPOWER

This information will serve us both in discussion as reminders and reference, and later (potentially), in your subsequent writing and projects. Here, specifically, assignment #2 in which you have to demonstrate your understanding of biopower.

Terms, Concepts, Topics

- ✓ **State racism** (239): Foucault notes that 18thC war was really war between races, ultimately giving way to a new form of racism in the 19thC
- ✓ **classic theory of sovereignty** (240): Foucault notes that in this theory sovereign power resides in "right of life and death," such as a king's right to put subject to death, to "take life and let live"
- ✓ **"make live and let die"** (241): Foucault notes that one of the greatest transformations in political right in the 19thC is the new supplemental right of the sovereign to "make life and let die"
- ✓ **political theory vs. technologies of power** (241): Foucault approaches transformations of power via analysis of particular "technologies of power" rather than abstract political theory
- ✓ **disciplinary technologies of power** (242): applied to the individual human body; everything from prisons and guillotines to bookkeeping,
- ✓ **nondisciplinary technologies power** (242): applied to man-as-living-being/man-as-species (populations) rather than to individual bodies/subjects; ex. birth-rate, longevity, mortality rate
- ✓ **biopolitics** (243): nondisciplinary technology of power concerning creation, regulation and control of populations and species
- ✓ **epidemics & endemics** (243-4): Foucault notes that in the 18thC the biopolitics were not focused on death-causing epidemics, but illnesses that affected the population's strength and productivity in the aggregate ("endemics")
- ✓ **biopower** (247): the power to make live and let die; technologies of power for managing and regularizing "the" population
- ✓ **"regularization of life" / "normalizing society"** (248 / 253): terms Foucault associates with biopower and biopolitics
- ✓ **"Medicine is a power-knowledge..."** (252): Foucault notes that medicine is knowledge intimately related to power and can be applied to the individual body as well as the bodies in the aggregate (populations), the organism and biological processes and as such will be manifest in both disciplinary and regulatory effects
- ✓ **norms** (252-3): Foucault states that norms function across modern modes of power (disciplinary and bio), orienting the discipline the body and regularization of the population in which the body circulates.
- ✓ **excess of biopower** (254): biopower that is in excess of sovereign right appearing when technological and political possibilities to both manage life but also create it emerge
- ✓ **racism** (254-263): a means of "introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control"; it enabled the logic of purification (of a population); under biopower racism is the "precondition that makes killing acceptable"; linked with "evolutionism" as a theme, racism becomes a means of justification for killing/genocide
- ✓ **war** (257-8): Foucault discusses the modern mode of war understood from the perspective of biopolitics and biopower, in which it is not only about destruction of political adversaries, but biological threats in the form of an "enemy race"
- ✓ **"a new racism"** (258): post-19thC biopower leads to a new form of racism modeled on war; war against perceived threats to the population