

Seminar in Political and Social Theory: Power in International Relations

2nd Term, Academic Year 2025-2026

Mondays, 13.00 – 15.00 (Seminar Room 2, Badia)

Ad-hoc seminars, 13.00 – 15.00 (various rooms)

The seminar is worth 20 credits.

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Description

This seminar introduces into different ways to understand the concept of power and the various theories in which such conceptualisations are embedded. It mainly refers to social and explanatory theories, less on political philosophy – ranging from Max Weber to Judith Butler – while illustrating it with some power analyses in International Relations. The seminar primary deals with the theoretical background of different power concepts, but also aims to illustrate how such concepts and theories can be mobilised for either empirical or theoretical analysis.

On its more theoretical side, the seminar's strategy consists in using the analysis of a single, if central, concept like power to show the diversity of theories in which it can be embedded. The concept does literally not mean the same thing across theories, just as the meaning of words changes across languages. The seminar therefore looks at the underlying assumptions, including, among others, ontological assumptions about explanatory primacy given to agency and structure, relational and process ontologies, materialism and idealism; but also epistemological assumptions about object-subject distinctions, and open social systems and the role of causality. Additionally, it looks at the various types of theorisations. Positivist theorising assumes regularities in the social world which it is its purpose to discover and to generalise. Theory is here the result of empirical knowledge. More constructivist theorising starts instead from the idea that theories are frameworks of analysis or analytical lenses. Here, theories (and prominently: concepts) are the condition for the possibility of knowledge. Theories are not only there to explain given problematiques; they provide the lenses for defining those problematiques in the first place. In short, inquiring the different conceptualisations of power can lay bare the different meta-theoretical assumptions with which we look at the world and its analysis, and, in turn, how such theorisations will frame the conceptualisation of power.

For the more empirical side, the seminar will refer to examples of how such frameworks are translated into research agendas and, at times, also empirical analysis, applied here to the field of International Relations. Hence, the weight is on theory. Yet, this focus on analytical frameworks is also crucial for many empirical designs and operationalisations. Here, the usages of frameworks can be theory-driven or empirically driven. If theory driven, the previous check of assumptions leads to select certain theoretical families which, in turn, inspire certain problematiques and help to raise specific questions. Although theory-driven, the analysis is hence not necessarily deductive, as conceptual frameworks inform research through pointing to the existence of important factors in the analysis, without necessarily leading to testable hypotheses. Just as often, the frameworks are there to *understand* phenomena, not to explain them: What *is* power – not what does power explain or explains power. If empirically driven, empirical puzzles become the expression of missing or misunderstood factors, rather than causal hunches. They invite researchers to shift their frameworks or to amend them.

The seminar proceeds in three steps. A first section focuses on the use of power in explanatory theories, in particular in theories of action. Against the backdrop of Max Weber's interpretive sociology of power (Macht) and domination (Herrschaft), the seminars cover the behaviouralist turn in political science when applied to the analysis of power and their critics. Here, power is conceptualised as a causal and relational variable for explaining behaviour. The following sessions then show how this particular approach can be called into question both for its causal (instead of dispositional) and behavioural (instead of structural) assumptions.

As this first step already alludes, the concept of power can be seen both as a factor with which we explain, and one that needs to be explained or understood in the first place. Hence, a second section focuses on conceptualisations that are geared towards capturing the very phenomenon of power and its analysis. We move from theories of action to theories of domination. The seminars start with Michel Foucault's historically informed political theory of power as discipline and later as governmentality / biopower. It then addresses Pierre Bourdieu's more sociological theory of social practices and his relational analysis of capitals and domination, before showing how these analysis have been applied in International Relations.

The seminar's third section then shifts the conceptual analysis. It no longer looks at what the concept of power *explains*, nor what the phenomenon of power *is*, but what socially shared understandings of "power" (empirically) *do*. For this, the seminar starts by more explicitly shifting the ontological assumptions of the way we analyse the social world. Ian Hacking's looping effects that constitute interactive kinds will serve for this. This is followed by Judith Butler's understanding of performativity and the way feminist / queer theories have specifically dealt with the phenomenon of power, followed by some empirical examples.

In short, the seminar tries to use the theorisation of power to provide researchers with a better grasp of the meta-theoretical choices and implications when doing their own research. Inversely, it uses these different theorisation to shed light on the possibilities to use power in our analyses, be they empirical or theoretical. For, as it turns out, power is a concept which relates to many terms, such as cause and influence, freedom and autonomy, government and order, authority and legitimacy, rule and domination, to name a few.

But for exactly that reason, the seminar is also cautioning not to fall into the trap of merely

seeing power everywhere or for believing that once one has unmasked power relations, one has done the job. Power is ubiquitous, hence its analysis can be generally only a first step for something else. Worse, a focus on power may lead to the realist fallacy to reduce politics to power, and while all power may be about politics, not all politics can be reduced to power. Locating power or domination may beg or hide the important questions.

Learning Outcomes

Researchers will gain an understanding of power analyses across social and political theory with an emphasis on theories of international relations

- As the meaning of concepts derives from the theories in which they are embedded, any conceptual analysis and critique is a form of theoretical translation. Accordingly, researchers will become aware of the ways such translations can be conducted
- Through the seminar readings, discussions, memos and their feedback, researchers learn to think their own research within and beyond power concepts and theories

Format and requirements

The class will be run as a seminar, where debate and discussion are the norm. Sessions 2-9 will be introduced by researchers who inform and guide the seminar debates. Researchers taking the seminar as elective are required to prepare 3 response memos (each 1000-2000 words or longer) over the course of the 10-week term, at the end of each section respectively (Deadlines: 24 January, 21 February, 14 March). The course convenor will provide individual feedback on each memo. A final paper is not obligatory, but should researchers wish to exchange their final memo into a longer paper (for receiving more feedback), they are welcome (and a later deadline can be arranged).

Additional ad hoc-seminars will be held on Thursdays, 13-15. They allow to deepen the session's theme, invite guest speakers, provide time for lectures (followed by Q&A), with some latitude to respond to the demands of seminar participants. They are not obligatory but highly recommended.

Schedule

Introduction

Session 1 (5 Jan 2026). Introduction into conceptual analysis. What is power? How to analyse power?

Section I. The use of power in explanatory theories (what explains power?)

Ad-hoc seminar (8 Jan 2026, Seminar room 3): Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* (Lecture)

Session 2. (12 Jan 2026) Power in relational and causal explanations

Ad hoc seminar (15 Jan 2026, Seminar room 3): Lukes' three dimensional analysis of power (Lecture)

Session 3. (19 Jan 2026): Power as a dispositional concept: Morriss

Session 4. (SIC: 22 Jan 2026. Seminar room 4): Dispositional and structural power explanations in IR

Deadline for first memo: 24 January

Section II. The use of power in theories of domination (what is power?)

Ad-hoc seminar (26 Jan 2026, Seminar room 2): Foucault – Governing the modern self (Lecture)

Session 5 (2 Feb 2026). Foucault – Governmentality and biopolitics

Ad hoc seminar (5 Feb 2026, Seminar room 3): Bourdieu - Field theory as theory of action: Habitus and practices (Lecture)

Session 6 (9 Feb 2026). Bourdieu - Field theory as theory of domination: relational capitals and symbolic power

Ad hoc seminar (12 Feb 2026, Seminar room 3): TBA

Session 7 (16 Feb 2026). Foucault and Bourdieu in International Relations

Deadline for second memo: 21 February

Section III. Power and performativity (What does “power”?)

Session 8 (23 Feb 2026). Interactive kinds and the power of looping effects

Ad hoc seminar (26 Feb 2026, Villa San Felice): TBA

Session 9 (2 Mars 2026). Power and the politics of the performative

Ad hoc seminar (5 Mars 2026, Seminar Room 3): TBA

Session 10 (9 Mars 2026). Wrapping up.

Deadline for third memo: 14 March

Background readings for the entire seminar

The following list of background readings is not required to be read for the seminar. Still, for those who wish to pursue their reflection on how to use power in their analysis, it offers some reference readings in social and political theories of power, as well as some specific IR takes.

- Allen, Amy. 2008. *The Politics of Our Selves: Power, Autonomy and Gender in Contemporary Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Allen, Amy. 2016. "Feminist Perspectives on Power." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2016/entries/feminist-power/>.
- Anter, Andreas. 2012. *Theorien der Macht. Zur Einführung*. Hamburg: Junius Verlag.
- Barnes, Barry. 1988. *The Nature of Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- *Clegg, Stewart R. 1989. *Frameworks of Power*. London et al.: Sage Publications.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1989. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- *Hindess, Barry. 1996. *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Jouvenel, Bertrand de. 1972 [1945]. *Du pouvoir. Histoire naturelle de sa croissance*. Paris: Hachette (orig. Genève: Le Cheval Ailé). Engl: *On Power: The Natural History of Its Growth*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1993 [1948].
- Morriss, Peter. 2002 [1987]. *Power: A Philosophical Analysis*. 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Saar, Martin. 2010. "Power and Critique." *Journal of Power* 3 (1): 7-20.
- Wartenberg, Thomas E. 1990. *The Forms of Power: From Domination to Transformation*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Wrong, Dennis H. 1988 [1979]. *Power: Its Forms, Bases and Uses*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

For encyclopedia and handbooks, see

- Berenskoetter, Felix, and Michael J. Williams, eds. 2007. *Power in World Politics*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Clegg, Stewart R., and Mark Haugaard, eds. 2009. *The Sage Handbook of Power*. London et al.: Sage.
- Dowding, Keith, ed. 2011. *Encyclopedia of Power*. London et al.: Sage.
- Haugaard, Mark, and Stewart R. Clegg, eds. 2012. *Power and Politics*. Vol. 4 vols, *Sage Library of Political Science*. London et al: Sage.

For knowing what the enemy thinks (but *not* mandatory reading):

- Guzzini, Stefano. 1993. "Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis." *International Organization* 47 (3): 443-78.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2005. "The concept of power: a constructivist analysis.", *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33 (3): 495-522.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2013. *Power, realism and constructivism*, London et al.: Routledge, Introduction.
- Guzzini, Stefano (2016) "Power." In *Concepts in World Politics*, edited by Felix Berenskoetter, 23-40. London et al.: Sage.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2017. 'Power and Cause.' *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20 (4): 737-59.
- Guzzini, Stefano (2022) "[Power in World Politics](#)." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, edited by William Thompson. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seminars

The reading list follows a format in which, besides the required readings per session, additional readings are indicated for all those interested to take the analysis further from that session. This is not meant to show off/intimidate but to give a head start for those who wish to pursue research on power and domination, whether in IR or elsewhere. Also, the readings often include classical texts that may seem dated. Some (not all!) of them are. But they are included both to allow knowledge of the original texts rather than often imprecise receptions and to retrace the steps in which our thought has developed (or not – when people all too common reinvent the wheel). Texts may not appear in alphabetical order, as I have indicated the required readings in the sequence that would seem most warranted.

Introduction

Session 1 (5 Jan 2026).

Introduction into conceptual analysis. What is power? How to analyse power?

The concept of power is used in explanatory theories (prominently as either *explanans* or *explanandum*) and in political theories, where it is connected to the understanding of government, rule, political order, but also freedom and autonomy, among other things. This seminar covers the various purposes and domains for which power analyses are conducted.

- **Readings**

Connolly, William. 1993 [1974]. *The Terms of Political Discourse*, 3rd ed., Oxford: Basil Blackwell (chap. 1: pp. 9-43).

Guzzini, Stefano. 2016. "Power." In *Concepts in World Politics*, edited by Felix Berenskoetter, 23-40. London et al.: Sage.

Section I. The use of power in explanatory theories (What explains power?)

Ad hoc seminar (8 Jan 2026): Weber's *verstehende Soziologie* (Lecture)

May Weber's texts are no fun read. This said, the *Basic Sociological Concepts* that have been posthumously put on the beginning of his *Economy and Society* are, if understood step by step, a perfect way to grasp the ways a social theory of action and then domination can be constructed. As he is a political realist, the concepts culminate in the understanding of the state and of power and authority (*Herrschaft*). This lecture will consist in a close reading of the text to show and follow this logic. It furthermore allows see how many present-day concepts of power and in particular un-reflected usages of power still bear the Weberian imprint.

- **Readings**

Weber, Max. 1978 [1921-22]. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (22-63, 212-216, 901-925). Berkeley: University of California Press.

- **Additional literature**

Aron, Raymond. 1967. *Les étapes de la pensée sociologique*. Paris: Gallimard (chapter on Weber and post-script: "Max Weber et la politique de puissance" [Engl. Translation. 1970: *Main currents of sociological thought*, vol. 2, Penguin Paperback, chapter on Weber]).

- Guzzini, Stefano. 2017. "Max Weber's power." In Richard Ned Lebow, ed., *Max Weber and International Relations*, 97-118. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Månson, Per. 2000. "Max Weber." In Heine Andersen & Lars Bo Kaspersen, eds, *Classical and Modern Social Theory*, 75-95. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Mommsen, Wolfgang. 1984. *Max Weber and German Politics 1890-1920*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ringer, Fritz. 2004. *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Schluchter, Wolfgang. 1981. *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wolin, Sheldon S. 1981. "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory." *Political Theory* 9 (3): 401-24.
- Weber, Max. 1978 [1921-22]. *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 311-318, 941-955. Berkeley: University of California Press, pp..
- Weber, Max. 1994 [1917-19]. *Wissenschaft als Beruf & Politik als Beruf*. Studienausgabe der Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Vol. MWS I/17, pp. 35 ff. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) [Engl. Translation. 2004. *The Vocation Lectures*, Indianapolis: Hackett.]

- **Max Weber and International Relations**

- Aron, Raymond (2003 [1962]) *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*, New York: Transaction Publ. (chapters 2-3: pp. 47-93).
- Morgenthau, Hans (2007 [1948]) *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York: McGraw Hill, brief edition (parts of chap. 3 (pp. 29-35), chap. 10 (pp. 166-180)).
- Lebow, Richard Ned, ed. (2017) *Max Weber and International Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- **Additional literature**

- Griffiths, Martin. 1992. *Realism, Idealism & International Politics: a reinterpretation*, London: Routledge (chapters 1-4).
- Guzzini, Stefano. 1998. *Realism in International Relations and International Political Economy: the continuing story of a death foretold*, London: Routledge (in particular chapters 2-3).
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2020. "Embrace IR Anxieties (or, Morgenthau's Approach to Power, and the Challenge of Combining the Three Domains of IR Theorizing)." *International Studies Review* 22 (2): 268-88.
- Haas, Ernst B. 1953. "The Balance of Power: Prescription, Concept or Propaganda?" *World Politics* V (3): 442-77.
- Hoffmann, Stanley. 1965. "Theory and International Relations." In his ed., *The State of War: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Relations*, 3-21. New York et al.: Praeger.
- Koskenniemi, Martti. 2000. "Carl Schmitt, Hans Morgenthau, and the image of law in international relations." In Michael Byers, ed., *The role of law in international politics*, 17-34. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Smith, Michael Joseph. 1986. *Realist Thought from Weber to Kissinger*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press (in particular chapters 1, 2, and 6).

Session 2 (12 Jan 2026). Power in relational and causal explanations

Power is a relational concept, so the mantra, because it is not something that can be reduced to mere resources or to a property concept. It only exists in relations. Yet, relationality can be understood in many different ways, which may not be clear from its recent inflationary usage in critical scholarship. This seminar introduces into the “community power debate” which was launched as a critique of elite sociology. It mobilises a causal and behavioural understanding of action and power, mobilising the very concept of power that Max Weber considered “amorphous”. This leads to internal tensions when relationality is taken seriously, as in Bachrach and Baratz’s critique and very contextualist reformulation. In International Relations, these approaches coincide with the liberal institutionalist critique of realist (power)analysis, stressing instead the contextual and hence sector / regime-specific analysis of interdependence.

- **Readings**

- Dahl, Robert. 1957. “The concept of power.” *Behavioural Science* 2 (3): 201-15.
- Bachrach, Peter and Morton S. Baratz. 1970. *Power and Poverty: Theory and Practice*, New York et al.: Oxford University Press (chapters 1-2: pp. 3-38).
- Dahl, Robert. 1968. “Power.” In David Sills, ed., *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 12, 405-15. New York: Free Press.
- Baldwin, David A. 1979. “Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends Versus Old Tendencies.” *World Politics* 31 (1): 161-94.

- **Additional readings on the “Community Power Debate”**

- Blau, Peter. 1964. *Exchange and Power in Social Life*, New York: Wiley.
- Dahl, Robert. 1958. “A critique of the ruling elite model.” *American Political Science Review*, 52 (2): 463-69.
- Dahl, Robert. 1961. *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City*, New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dahl, Robert. 1976. *Modern Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall (pp. 1-41).
- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The Power Elite*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Polsby, Nelson. 1980. *Community Power and Political Theory*, 2nd ed., New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Riker, William. 1964. “Some ambiguities in the notion of power.” *American Political Science Review* 58 (2): 341-49.
- Stoppino, Mario. 2001. *Potere e teoria politica*. 3rd ed. Milano: Giuffrè Editore.

- **Relational approaches in IR (and their critique)**

- Keohane, Robert and Joseph Nye. 2001. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*, 3rd ed., New York: Longman (chapters 1-3: pp. 3-52 – the same as in 1977).
- Keohane, Robert O. and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. 1987. “Power and Interdependence Revisited.” *International Organization* 41 (4): 725-53.
- Nye, Joseph S., Jr. 1988. “Neorealism and Neoliberalism.” *World Politics* 40 (2): 235-51.
- Baldwin, David. 1985. *Economic Statecraft*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Baldwin, David A. 1989. *Paradoxes of Power*. Oxford: Blackwell.

- Baldwin, David A. 2016. *Power and International Relations: A Conceptual Approach*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2000. "The Use and Misuse of Power Analysis in International Theory." In *Global Political Economy: Contemporary Theories*, edited by Ronen Palan, 53-66. London, New York: Routledge.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2017. "Power and Cause." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 20 (4): 737-59.

Ad hoc seminar (15 Jan 2026): Lukes' three dimensional analysis of power (Lecture)

Steven Lukes' distinction of three dimensions of power summarises and criticizes the community power-debate in US political science in a way to connect both explanatory and political theory. The last two editions of the book also include his defense of his approach against his critics, as well as reflections on other power approaches. In this way, it allows to sketch out some of the important themes to be discussed when addressing power in the later seminars. For this reason, it makes sense to read the whole book already now. Yet, the presentation will be only about the "old" part, informed by his reply to his critiques.

- **Readings**

Lukes, Steven. 2021. *Power: A Radical View*. 3rd ed. London: Macmillan/Red Globe Press (for the seminar, see pp. 19-65).

- **Additional readings**

By Lukes

- Lukes, Steven. 1977. "Power and Structure." In his *Essays in Social Theory*, 3-29. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lukes, Steven. 1979. "Power and Authority." In *History of Sociological Analysis*, edited by T. Bottomore and R. Nisbet, 633-76. London: Heinemann.
- Lukes, Steven, and LaDawn Haglund. 2005. "Power and Luck." *Archives européennes de sociologie* 15 (2): 45-66.
- Lukes, Steven. 2021. "Power and Domination." *Journal of Political Power* 14 (1): 97-108.

By critiques

- Barry, Brian. 1989 [1987]. "The Uses of Power." In *Democracy, Power and Justice*, 307-21. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Bradshaw, Alan. 1976. "A Critique of Steven Lukes *Power: A Radical View*." *Sociology* 10 (1): 121-27 and reply by Lukes, pp. 129-32.
- *Gaventa, John. 1980. *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Hayward, Clarissa Rile. 2000. *De-Facing Power*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Isaac, Jeffrey C. 1987. *Power and Marxist Theory: A Realist View*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- *Isaac, Jeffrey C. 1987. "Beyond the Three Faces of Power: A Realist Critique." *Polity* 20 (1): 4-31.
- Morris, Peter. 2006. "Steven Lukes on the Concept of Power." *Political Studies Review* 4 (2): 124-35. (discussing the second edition)
- Oppenheim, Felix. 1978. "'Power' revisited." *Journal of Politics* 40 (3): 589-608.

Session 3. (19 Jan 2026): Power as a dispositional concept: Peter Morriss

Peter Morriss' book is more than simply another contribution to the community power debate. By carefully dissecting its assumptions and providing a deceptively clean and straightforward re-conceptualisation of power as an ability, it leads to a quite profound questioning of the very way we may set up explanations in the first place. As power has been used as form of causation (see session 2), what if power is a way to rethink causation and vice versa? How do contextual and dispositional analysis work together?

- **Readings**

Morriss, Peter. 2002 [1987]. *Power: A Philosophical Analysis*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, Part I (What power is and what power is not, pp. 8-46)

Session 4. (SIC: 22 Jan 2026): Dispositional and structural power explanations in IR

The readings of the session will concentrate on contributions in International Political Economy. Starting with the structuralist twist introduced by Latin American dependency theory, post-Marxist analysis finally reached the IR mainstream in the 1980s, mainly in the form of Gramscian approaches (see also Lukes). Concepts of structural power appeared that saw power as a positional quality given by the specific position of agents within wider structures in the way structures *dis/empower* agents.

- **Readings**

Dos Santos, Teodoro. 1970. "The Structure of Dependence." *American Economic Review* LX (2): 231-36.

Rupert, Mark. 2000. *Ideologies of Globalization: Contending Visions of a New World Order*. London, New York: Routledge (pp. 1-64)

Strange, Susan. 1988. *States and Markets: An Introduction to International Political Economy*, New York: Basil Blackwell (Prologue and chap. 2: pp. 1-6, 23-42).

- **Additional readings**

Caporaso, James A. 1978. "Dependence, dependency and power in the global system: a structural and behavioural analysis." *International Organization* 32 (1): 13-43.

Gill, Stephen and David Law. 1989. "Global Hegemony and the Structural Power of Capital." *International Studies Quarterly* 33 (4): 475-99.

Guzzini, Stefano. 1993. "Structural power: the limits of neorealist power analysis." *International Organization* 47 (3): 443-78.

Krause, Keith. 1991 "Military Statecraft: Power and Influence in Soviet and American Arms Transfer Relationships." *International Studies Quarterly* 35 (3): 313-36.

Rupert, Mark. 1995. *Producing Hegemony: The Politics of Mass Production and American Global Power*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Strange, Susan. 1987. "The persistent myth of lost hegemony." *International Organization* 41 (4): 551-74.

Strange, Susan. 1990. "Finance, Information, and Power." *Review of International Studies* 16 (3): 259-74.

Strange, Susan. 1996. *The retreat of the state: the diffusion of power in the world economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Section II. The use of power in theories of domination (What is power?)

1. Power analysis and modern “government”: Michel Foucault

For decades, Michel Foucault has been one of the most influential thinkers of *pouvoir*, which does however not stand for agential power (*puissance*) but for “government” in the traditional philosophical sense, that is, the origin and nature of political order. Confronted with the conservative paradox of how more individual freedom can produce more order, his approach historically retraces the discursive formations constituting “normal” modern European subjectivities. He conceptualises power as a diffuse mechanism operating through self-disciplining individuals and a governmental logic that orders the life of people (biopolitics), asking us to theoretically “behead the King” for understanding power as political order “beyond the state”.

Ad-hoc seminar (26 Jan 2026): Foucault – Governing the modern self (Lecture)

- Readings

Foucault, Michel. 1975. *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*. Paris: Gallimard, Part I, chap. 1 (pp. 9-35) and Part III, chap. 3 (pp. 197-229). Engl. Edition: 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage, Part 1, chap. 1 (pp. 3-31); Part 3, chap. 3 (pp. 195-230).

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Histoire de la sexualité, 1. La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, Section III and IV, 1&2 (pp. 71-135). Engl. Edition : 1978. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage (pp. 53-102).

Session 5 (2 Feb 2026). Foucault – Governmentality and biopolitics

- Readings

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *Histoire de la sexualité, 1. La volonté de savoir*. Paris: Gallimard, Section V (pp. 175-211). Engl. Edition : 1978. *The History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage (pp. 133-158).

Foucault, Michel. 2004 [1978]. “Leçon du 1^{er} février 1978.” In *Sécurité, Territoire, Population. Cours au Collège de France, 1977-1978*, 91-118. Paris: Le Seuil. Engl. Edition: 1991. “Governmentality.” In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Collin Gordon and Peter Miller, 87-104. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1983 [1982]. “The Subject and Power.” In *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, 2nd ed., edited by Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, 208-26. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

- Additional readings

Abélès, Marc. 2008. “Michel Foucault, l’anthropologie et la question du pouvoir.” *L’Homme* 2008/3-4 (No. 187-188): 105-22.

Allen, Amy. 2002. “Power, Subjectivity, and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault.” *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 10 (2): 131-49.

Borch, Christian. 2005. “Systemic Power: Luhmann, Foucault, and Analytics of Power.” *Acta Sociologica* 48 (2): 155-67.

- Butler, Judith. 2002. "Bodies and Power, Revisited." *Radical Philosophy* 114 (Jul/Aug): 13-19.
- Dean, Mitchell. 1999. *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. London: Sage.
- Dreyfus, Hubert L. and Paul Rabinow. 1983 [1982]. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*. 2nd ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Falzon, Christopher, Timothy O'Leary, and Jana Sawicki, eds. 2013. *A Companion to Foucault*. Oxford et al.: Blackwell.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1981. "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions." *PRAXIS International* (3): 272-87.
- Gordon, Colin. 1991. "Governmental rationality: an introduction." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Graham Burchell, Collin Gordon and Peter Miller, 1-52. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2003. "Comment on Nancy Fraser: Rereading Foucault in the Shadow of Globalization." *Constellations* 10 (2): 172-9.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2011. *Biopolitics: An Advanced Introduction*. New York: NYU Press.
- Lemke, Thomas. 2021. *The Government of Things: Foucault and the New Materialisms*. New York: NYU Press.
- Lindgren, Sven-Åke. 2000. "Michel Foucault." In *Classical and Modern Social Theory*, edited by Heine Andersen & Lars Bo Kaspersen, 294-308. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Luxon, Nancy. 2013. *Crisis of Authority: Politics, Trust, and Truth-Telling in Freud and Foucault*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- McNay, Lois. 1992. *Foucault and Feminism: Power, Gender and the Self*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Nichols, Robert. 2014. *The World of Freedom: Heidegger, Foucault, and the Politics of Historical Ontology*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Oksala, Johanna. 2005. *Foucault on Freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Reed, Isaac Ariail. 2013. "Power: Relational, Discursive, and Performative Dimensions." *Sociological Theory* 31 (3): 193-218.
- Sawicki, Jana. 1991. *Disciplining Foucault: Feminism, Power, and the Body*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Taylor, Charles. 1984. "Foucault on Freedom and Truth." *Political Theory* 12 (2): 152-83.

For biographical background (written from a scholar and friend)

- Éribon, Didier. 2011 [1989]. *Michel Foucault*. 2nd revised ed. Paris: Flammarion. Engl. Edition: Éribon, Didier. 1991. *Michel Foucault*. Translated by Betsy Wing. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

2. Relational capital, misrecognition and domination: Pierre Bourdieu

With Pierre Bourdieu, the analysis of power returns to social theory. He combines a theory of social and symbolic action with a theory of domination. As a result, his overall analysis of domination relies on both the theoretical project of field theory – the triangle of field, habitus and practices – and his analysis of capitals constituted through relations in various fields. In a reconceptualisation of both Weber and Gramsci, Bourdieu understands domination through both the competition and redefinition of the field-specific hierarchy of effective capitals, and the

often symbolic mechanisms of acceptance by which the logic of actual rule functions for being misrecognized.

Ad hoc seminar (5 Feb 2026): Field theory as theory of action: Habitus and practices (Lecture)

- Readings

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1980. *Le sens pratique*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, chapters 3-8 (pp. 87-232). Engl. Edition: 1990. *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge: Polity Press (pp. 52-134).

Session 6 (9 Feb 2026).

Field theory as theory of domination: relational capitals and symbolic power

- Readings

Bourdieu, Pierre. 1994. *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil (pp. 53-57, 99-133, 175-213). English edition: 1998. *Practical Reason. On the Theory of Action*. Stanford: Stanford University Press (pp. 31-63, 92-123). The first chapter in this book is a short and excellent summary of *La distinction* which is a study of social stratification in France.

Bourdieu, Pierre. 2001. *Language et pouvoir symbolique*. 2nd rev. ed. Paris: Seuil, Deuxième Partie, 1-2 (pp. 155-186), Troisième Partie, 1 (pp. 201-212). Engl. Edition: 1991. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press (pp. 105-126, 163-70, plus endnotes).

- **Additional readings on Bourdieu's social theory and theory of domination**

By Bourdieu

Bourdieu, Pierre, avec Loïc J.D. Wacquant. 1992. *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

Short introductions

Callewaert, Staf (2000) 'Pierre Bourdieu', in *Classical and Modern Social Theory*, edited by Heine Andersen & Lars Bo Kaspersen, 309-325. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Leander, Anna. 2008. "Thinking Tools: Analyzing Symbolic Power and Violence." In *Qualitative Methods in International Relations: A Pluralist Guide*, edited by Audie Klotz and Deepa Prakash, 11-27. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Leander, Anna. 2010. "Habitus and Field." In *Blackwell: International Studies Compendium Project / Oxford Research Encyclopedia of International Studies*, edited by Robert A. Denemark, 3255-70. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. DOI: 10.1093/acrefore/9780190846626.013.51

Brubaker, Rogers. 1985. "Rethinking Classical Theory: The Sociological Vision of Pierre Bourdieu." *Theory and Society* 14 (6): 745-75.

Butler, Judith. 1999. "Performativity's Social Magic." In *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, edited by Richard Shusterman, 113-28. Oxford: Blackwell.

Dalton, Benjamin. 2004. "Creativity, Habit, and the Social Products of Creative Action: Revising Joas, Incorporating Bourdieu." *Sociological Theory* 22 (4): 603-22.

- Go, Julian. 2013. "Decolonizing Bourdieu: Colonial and Postcolonial Theory in Pierre Bourdieu's Early Work." *Sociological Theory* 31 (1): 49-74.
- Krais, Beate. 2006. "Gender, Sociological Theory and Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice." *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (6): 119-34.
- Krause, Monika. 2018. "How Fields Vary." *The British Journal of Sociology* 69 (1): 3-22.
- McNay, Lois. 1999. "Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity." *Theory, Culture & Society* 16 (1): 95-117.
- Medvetz, Thomas, and Jeffrey J. Sallaz, eds. 2018. *The Oxford Handbook of Pierre Bourdieu*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Mukerji, Chandra. 2014. "The Cultural Power of Tacit Knowledge: Inarticulacy and Bourdieu's Habitus." *American Journal of Cultural Sociology* 2 (3): 348-75.
- *Reckwitz, Andreas. 2002. "Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5 (2): 243-63.
- Scheer, Monique. 2012. "Are Emotions a Kind of Practice (and Is That What Makes Them Have a History)? A Bourdieuan Approach to Understanding Emotion." *History and Theory* 51 (2): 193-220.
- Shusterman, Richard, ed. 1999. *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
- Steinmetz, George. 2006. "Bourdieu's Disavowal of Lacan: Psychoanalytic Theory and the Concepts of 'Habitus' and 'Symbolic Capital'." *Constellations* 13 (4): 445-64.
- Steinmetz, George. 2022. "The Algerian Origins of Bourdieu's Concepts and His Rejection of Social Reproductionism." *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* LXIII (2): 323-48.
- Wacquant, Loic J. D. 1989. "Towards a Reflexive Sociology: A Workshop with Pierre Bourdieu." *Sociological Theory* 7 (1): 26-63.
- Yacine, Tassadit. 2004. "Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria at War: Notes on the Birth of an Engaged Ethnology." *Ethnography* 5 (4): 487-509.

Ad hoc seminar (12 Feb 2026): TBA

Session 7 (16 Feb 2026). Foucault and Bourdieu in International Relations

- Readings

- Mérand, Frédéric. 2010. "Pierre Bourdieu and the Birth of European Defense." *Security Studies* 19 (2): 342-74.
- Cohen, Antonin. 2013. "The Genesis of Europe: Competing Elites and the Emergence of a European Field of Power." In *Transnational Power Elites: The New Professionals of Governance, Law and Security*, edited by Niilo Kauppi and Mikael Rask Madsen, 103-20. London, New York: Routledge.
- Sending, Ole Jacob, and Iver B. Neumann. 2006. "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power." *International Studies Quarterly* 50 (3): 651-72.
- Joseph, Jonathan. 2010. "The Limits of Governmentality: Social Theory and the International." *European Journal of International Relations* 16 (2): 223-46.

- Additional readings

- Adler-Nissen, Rebecca. 2013. *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR*. Abingdon: Routledge.

- Bigo, Didier. 2011. "Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power." *International Political Sociology* 5 (3): 225-58.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2000. "A Reconstruction of Constructivism in International Relations." *European Journal of International Relations* 6 (2): 147-82.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2013. "Power: Bourdieu's Field Analysis of Relational Capital, Misrecognition and Domination." In *Bourdieu in International Relations: Rethinking Key Concepts in IR*, edited by Rebecca Adler-Nissen, 79-92. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jabri, Vivienne. 2007. "Michel Foucault's Analytics of War: The Social, the International and the Racial." *International Political Sociology* 1 (1): 67-87.
- Jabri, Vivienne. 2012. *The Postcolonial Subject: Claiming Politics/Governing Others in Late Modernity*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Knafo, Samuel. 2016. "Bourdieu and the Dead End of Reflexivity: On the Impossible Task of Locating the Subject." *Review of International Studies* 42 (1): 25-47.
- Larner, W, and William Walters, eds. 2005. *Global Governmentality: Governing International Spaces*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Leander, Anna. 2011. "The Promises, Problems, and Potentials of a Bourdieu-Inspired Staging of International Relations." *International Political Sociology* 5 (3): 294-313.
- Löwenheim, Oded. 2008. "Examining the State: A Foucauldian perspective on international 'governance indicators'." *Third World Quarterly* 29 (2): 255-274.
- Mérand, Frédéric, and Vincent Pouliot. 2008. "Le monde de Pierre Bourdieu: Éléments pour une théorie sociale des relations internationales." *Revue canadienne de science politique* 41 (3): 603-25.
- Merlingen, Michael. 2003. "Governmentality: Towards a Foucauldian Framework for the Study of IGOs." *Cooperation and Conflict* 38 (4): 361-84.
- Merlingen, Michael. 2006. "Foucault and World Politics: Promises and Challenges of Extending Governmentality Theory to the European and Beyond." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 35 (1): 181-96.
- Pouliot, Vincent. 2016. *International Pecking Orders: The Politics and Practice of Multilateral Diplomacy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (chapters 2+3: 48-85).
- Sending, Ole Jacob, Vincent Pouliot, and Iver B. Neumann, eds. 2015. *Diplomacy and the Making of World Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Villumsen Berling, Trine. 2015. *The International Political Sociology of Security: Rethinking Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Zanotti, Laura. 2005. "Governmentalizing the Post-Cold War International Regime: The UN Debate on Democratization and Good Governance." *Alternatives* 30 (4): 461-87.
- Zanotti, Laura. 2013. "Governmentality, Ontology, Methodology: Re-Thinking Political Agency in the Global World." *Alternatives* 38 (4): 288-304.

Deadline for second memo: 21 February

Section III. Power and performativity (What does "power"?)

Session 8 (23 Feb 2026). Interactive kinds and the power of looping effects

Ian Hacking's work is not directly about power, but the analysis of interactive kinds and looping effects is a sociological development of Foucault's productive concept of power (Hacking took

over Foucault's position at the *Collège de France*). At the same time, it is a powerful way to introduce speech acts and performativity more widely.

- **Readings**

Hacking, Ian. 1999. *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge: Harvard University Press (chapters 1, 4: pp. 1-35, 100-124).

- **Additional readings**

Koopman, Colin. 2015. "Two Uses of Michel Foucault in Political Theory: Concepts and Methods in Giorgio Agamben and Ian Hacking." *Constellations* 22 (4): 571-85.

In IR:

Guzzini, Stefano. 2009. On the Measure of Power and the Power of Measure. *DIIS Working Papers 2009: 28*. Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies.

Broome, André, Alexandra Homolar, and Matthias Kranke. 2018. "Bad Science: International Organizations and the Indirect Power of Global Benchmarking." *European Journal of International Relations* 24 (3): 514-39.

Mälksoo, Maria. 2021. "A Ritual Approach to Deterrence: I Am, Therefore I Deter." *European Journal of International Relations* 27 (1): 53-78.

Merry, Sally Engle. 2011. "Measuring the World: Indicators, Human Rights, and Global Governance: With a Comment by John M. Conley." *Current Anthropology* 52 (S3): S83-S95.

Ad hoc seminar (26 Feb 2026): TBA (e.g. Inviting Laura Sjoberg)

Session 9 (2 Mars 2026). Power, subjection, and the politics of the performative

Inspired by Foucauldian thought, yet developing it further, Judith Butler's understanding of performatives, i.e. discourses that help create the subject they presuppose, is both a linguistic and embodied analysis of how our understanding of the world interacts with it. Although initially derived from gender studies, it can be applied to different subjectivations.

- **Readings**

Butler, Judith. 1999 [1990]. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. 2nd ed. New York & London: Routledge, pp. vii-xxvii, 3-44 (a bit quicker to reach 33-44), 171-190.

Butler, Judith. 1997. *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 1-30.

Butler, Judith. 2010. "Performative Agency." *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3 (2): 147-61.

Allen, Amy. 1998. "Power Trouble: Performativity as Critical Theory." *Constellations* 5 (4): 456-71.

- **Additional Readings**

Butler, Judith, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. 2007. *Who Sings the Nation-State? Language, Politics, Belonging*. London, New York, Calcutta: Seagull Books.

Benhabib, Seyla, Judith Butler, Drucilla Cornell, and Nancy Fraser. 1995. *Feminist Contentions: A Philosophical Exchange*. New York, London: Routledge.

- Disch, Lisa. 1999. "Judith Butler and the Politics of the Performative." *Political Theory* 27 (4): 545-59.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. 1999. "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler." *The New Republic*, 22 February 1999.
- Webster, Fiona. 2000. "The Politics of Sex and Gender: Benhabib and Butler Debate Subjectivity." *Hypatia* 15 (1): 1-22.

In IR:

- Amicelle, Anthony, Claudia Aradau, and Julien Jeandesboz. 2015. "Questioning Security Devices: Performativity, Resistance, Politics." *Security Dialogue* 46 (4): 293-306.
- Bartelson, Jens. 2018. *War in International Thought*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bialasiewicz, Luiza, David Campbell, Stuart Elden, Stephen Graham, Alex Jeffrey, and Alison J. Williams. 2007. "Performing Security: The Imaginative Geographies of Current US Strategy." *Political Geography* 26 (4): 405-22.
- Gentry, Caron E., and Laura Sjoberg. 2015. *Beyond Mothers, Monsters, Whores: Thinking About Women's Violence in Global Politics*. London: Zed Books.
- Guzzini, Stefano. 2017. "International Political Sociology, Or: The Social Ontology and Power Politics of Process." In *Routledge Handbook of International Political Sociology*, edited by Xavier Guillaume and Pinar Bilgin, 366-75. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Laffey, Mark. 2000. "Locating Identity: Performativity, Foreign Policy and State Action." *Review of International Studies* 26 (3): 429-44.
- Teles Fazendeiro, Bernardo. 2016. "Rethinking Roles: Reflexive Role Ascription and Performativity in International Relations." *International Studies Review* 18 (3): 487-507.
- Walter, Timo. 2024. "One Future to Bind Them All? Modern Central Banking and the Limits of Performative Governability." *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 26 (3): 718-41.
- Weber, Cynthia. 1998. "Performative States." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 27 (1): 77-95.
- Weber, Cynthia. 2016. *Queer International Relations: Sovereignty, Sexuality, and the Will to Knowledge*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Performativity in speech acts (Copenhagen School)

- Wæver, Ole. 1995. "Securitization and Desecuritization." In *On Security*, edited by Ronnie Lipschutz, 46-86. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Hansen, Lene. 2000. "The Little Mermaid's Silent Security Dilemma and the Absence of Gender in the Copenhagen School." *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 29 (2): 285-306.
- Philipsen, Lise. 2020. "Performative Securitization: From Conditions of Success to Conditions of Possibility." *Journal of International Relations and Development* 23 (1): 139-63.

Ad hoc seminar (5 Mars 2026): TBA

Session 10 (9 Mars 2026). Wrapping up.

Deadline for third memo: 14 March