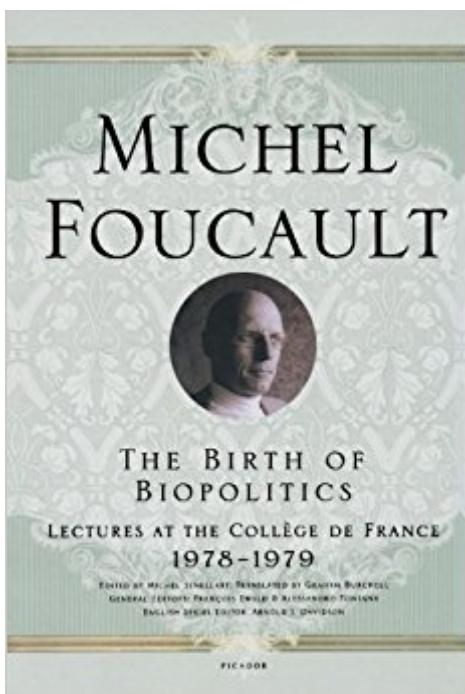


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The Birth Of Biopolitics: Lectures At The Collège De France, 1978--1979 (Lectures At The College De France)



Synopsis

Picador is proud to publish the sixth volume in Foucault's prestigious, groundbreaking series of lectures at the Collège de France from 1970 to 1984. *The Birth of Biopolitics* continues to pursue the themes of Foucault's lectures from Security, Territory, Population. Having shown how eighteenth-century political economy marks the birth of a new governmental rationality--seeking maximum effectiveness by governing less and in accordance with the naturalness of the phenomena to be governed--Michel Foucault undertakes a detailed analysis of the forms of this liberal governmentality. In a direct and conversational tone, this book raises questions of political philosophy and social policy that are at the heart of current debates about the role and status of neo-liberalism in twentieth century politics.

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Customer Reviews

“Foucault must be reckoned with by humanists, social scientists, and political activists.” • “The New York Times Book Review” Foucault has an alert and sensitive mind that can ignore the familiar surfaces of established intellectual codes and ask new questions. . . . He gives dramatic quality to the movement of culture. • “The New York Review of Books” Foucault is quite central to our sense of where we are. . . . [His work carries] out, in the noblest way, the promiscuous aim of true culture. • “The Nation”

MICHEL FOUCAULT, acknowledged as the preeminent philosopher of France in the 1970s and

1980s, continues to have enormous impact throughout the world in many disciplines. Translated by Graham Burchell.

This book is a collection of lectures that Foucault gave. They are focused on the development of Neo-liberalism after World War II, in Germany and the U.S. Foucault traces the development of this theory and how it differs in Germany and the U.S. respectively. The book being a collection of his lectures, it is at times choppy when reading, because at times the recordings were not able to pick up what was being said. The editor of the book does a wonderful job at acknowledging these parts, but I did not find them detracting from the work. The editor also wrote the lectures in a way that reproduces the lecture so that one can close their eyes and easily imagine themselves there listening to them. The analysis of Neo-Liberalism in this book is the best that I have ever read, and the depth of thought is amazing. It is not an easy read, but one that anyone interested in theory or Foucault should read. It is enjoyable and worth every penny spent.

I am a historian doing researches on the economic and legal development in Chinese early modern history. Reading Foucault's *The Birth of Biopolitics* is a wonderful experience, I learned a lot and cannot help but to think that the dialectics between "external politics" and "internal politics" in Europe from 17thc on may probably constitute an interesting and plausible comparative framework against the deployment of statecraft project in the sixteenth to eighteenth century China.

Very good book, very actual.

This is a book that I have found myself going back to over the years I have owned it, as only slowly did its importance become apparent. This is partly its weakness, like many Foucault books, it works sideways and sometimes seems to go in circles, and it is easy to become lost in the heavy verbiage. However, if you can hang on, you will find, like most of his books, a logic structure at work that suddenly hits you with its weight. This book is that in its, for its time then and now, ground breaking analysis of neoliberalism/free market fundamentalism. It follows from the Security, Territory, Population lecture in analyzing the development of the idea of political economy and traces its praxis. In this book we see that course run to the most modern period Foucault is said to have covered, looking at the development of post WW2 political economy, specifically the neo (ordo) liberals of the West, specifically Germany and U.S., covering ideologues like Hayek, Friedman, Mises, and others. The major drawback is that it feels that the actual title, *Birth of Biopolitics* is never

fully connected to the course material, leaving a sense of a project unfinished. Otherwise this is a very practical political analysis, a college course in free market fundamentalism and its relevancy to our world. Should be read in conjunction with the books 'The Shock Doctrine', and 'Dark Money', as well as the lecture before it, 'Security, Territory, Population'. You study his style of investigation and analysis as much as the actual topic covered.

These lectures demonstrate persuasively that the attempt to master life, especially human life, is not the legacy of Nazism or sci-fi nightmares, but the spontaneous consequence of economic liberalism in its modern form. The idea that government should intervene in society but only to establish, strengthen, and extend the market and its principles to all areas of society means that the population must be managed and even remediated or improved to ensure its members can participate productively in the market. Foucault ends these lectures, after this important demonstration, by showing how the idea of civil society is both a complement to this vision of the market economy and the motor of history that leads to potentially radical changes in politics. This book is a must-read for all serious students of Foucault, critical theory, and contemporary politics.

Michel Foucault at his best reveals mechanisms once considered radically invasive that now now permeate the "basic" structure of Western government and public institutions. Here, his discussions on the uncomfortable common grounds between centrist or left-of-centre Democracies and totalitarian states turns on the former's absorption of Frankfurt School economics and a general sort of self-absolving historical pessimism. What begins as a revulsion with Fascism and National Socialism supposedly ends with a deflating realization that they are only the maximalist endpoints of some very "logical" lines of inquiry in the west. These include "How can we expand 'the markets' to encompass the entire body politic?" and "How can we use the markets to scrutinize the population's behaviour while making the markets themselves inscrutable?" and "How can we apply this process to any number of political and social organs?" It is only the methods that differ and even then, only some of the time. This book contains Foucault's usual hang-ups. He does not investigate gender, ethnicity, poverty or non-European theatres seriously. But it is still essential reading for the decade we are in. Jonah Goldberg had no reason to write "Liberal Fascism" because everything he could have hoped to say about the subject is right here.

was great

I bought this book in French when it was first published in 2004. At the time the topic meant very little to me in that we were living in a world that had re-elected GWB and seemed somehow to have found stability in its grandiose fantasies... House prices were up up up... The Stock market was up up up... Iraq was becoming another Vietnam ... Liberal thought was as solid a dogma as ever and not a set of evolving ideas ... We lived in a form of ideologically blocked society. 'If you're not for us...' The Security volume caught my attention. Last week - after having it literally fall on my knee - I picked it up and opened it. Not only was it fascinating but it helped me understand better the thinking behind the world that fell apart these past six months. A great read and his developments on liberalism are clear and brilliant!

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