
CALL FOR PAPERS

Foucault and the Complexity of Power: State, Class and Neoliberalism

Edited by Raffaele Maria Campanile and Olimpia Malatesta

Since the 1970s, one of the main criticisms directed at Michel Foucault, particularly by the Marxist tradition, has been that of having underestimated the configurations of power crystallized in the State, having replaced a macro-political analysis of the forms of (class) subordination with a microphysical analysis of power – one can think of Poulantzas or Rehmann. On the contrary, on the post-structuralist front, Todd May has exalted the Foucauldian analytics of power, in opposition to Marxist structural analyses, insofar as the work of the French philosopher reflects on the concrete forms of exclusion, subordination and direction.

In recent years, various authors have sought to reconcile the Marxist and post-structuralist traditions by relating the macrophysics and the microphysics of power (one can think of Balibar or Negri); others, instead, have sought to thematize the convergence between sovereignty and biopolitics (such as Agamben or Esposito). However, it has not been sufficiently emphasized how, in the works of the 1970s – both the books he published and the courses at the Collège de France – Foucault elaborates a new analytical approach capable of grasping the complexity of power, thereby escaping those criticisms which claim that his analyses are incapable of understanding the functions and mechanisms of the modern State and of the class relations that have traversed modernity up to its neoliberal configuration.

In the inaugural lectures of *Sécurité, Territoire, Population* and of *Naissance de la biopolitique*, Foucault outlines an analysis of the State that eludes both the Schmittian logic of sovereign decision and the Hegelian idealist essentialism. From this perspective, it is perhaps possible to interpret “la logique de la stratégie” as a type of analysis that, underneath the universals – and in particular the State – identifies a complexity of devices (*dispositifs*) and plural rationalities that define the performance of the state machine. Foucault thus provides us with an investigation of the State by describing it as an “operator” that governs through (bio-)economic rationalities and whose activity ramifies into a plurality of forms and of class subordinations.

The “strategic” methodological approach seems to provide the traits of a dialectic of the “complex”, an attempt already inaugurated by Althusser and radicalized by Foucault when he elaborates a “rationality” that renews the sense of the “universal”, understood as an articulation – contingent, conjunctural, mobile, rewritable – but also the sense of the “macro-political” sphere, grasped in its “micro-physical” ramification. In this sense, the Foucauldian discourse on the State allows us to thematize the relationship between “structure” and “*dispositifs*” activated at the level of the individualities and singularities, as affirmed by Bidet. From this perspective, even the concept of “government”, analyzed by Foucault in a long-duration historical process, albeit through ruptures

and “paradigm shifts”, cannot escape the class dynamics and its microphysical ramification (disciplines), that is, the complexity immanent to the State.

The contributions included in the special issue *Foucault and the Complexity of Power: State, Class and Neoliberalism*, edited by Raffaele Maria Campanile and Olimpia Malatesta, will focus on the problem of the complexity of power in Foucauldian thought. They will analyze the problem of the State in Foucault’s theoretical elaboration, both by reconstructing his discourse and by identifying the specificities of his approach with respect to other modern and contemporary analytical “paradigms”. Essays that focus on the articulation between Foucault and Marx, addressing the problem of class relations, will be welcome, as well as articles outlining the main traits of the neoliberal government also in its relation to security devices, and Foucault’s interpretation of neoliberal thought.

More specifically, we are looking for papers that address the following (and related) topics:

- How can “*la logique de la stratégie*” open up new reflections on the complexity of power? How can this provide a research perspective that aims at integrating Marx’s and Foucault’s works, particularly on class relations?
- What is the specificity of Foucauldian analytics of the state? And how does it relate to the analyses on the government? What is the relationship between governmental practices and the singular, microphysical relations of power?
- What is the specificity of neoliberalism and of the neoliberal state? How are security devices integrated not only in the liberal but also in the neoliberal government? What is the legacy of Foucault’s analysis of neoliberalism and how does it help to grasp the difference between the main declinations of neoliberal thought (German ordoliberalism, Austrian and American neoliberalism)? What kind of (self)discipline does competition engender? And in what way can we discern the class relations immanent to this government?

To submit an **article**, authors are required to send the complete manuscript to the following email address: cfp@rivistapolitics.eu (subject line: “CFP 26”).

The submission must specify the title of the article, the author’s name, and the methodological approach adopted (e.g., History of Political Thought, Political Philosophy, or a multidisciplinary approach).

Articles must not exceed **35,000 characters** (including spaces but excluding the bibliography, abstract, and keywords). They must be prepared in accordance with the **Chicago Manual of Style, 17th edition (Author–Date)** and must exclusively use the journal’s [template file](#). Submissions that do not use the template will not be considered.

All submitted articles must be original and comply with the journal’s **Code of Ethics**.

Deadlines:

- **1 September 2026:** launch of the call for papers
- **19 October:** deadline for article submissions
- **20 October – 11 December:** double-blind peer review period
- **12 December:** notification of peer review results
- **30 December:** submission of revised articles following reviewers’ comments (if any)
- **10 February 2027:** publication