

**MALS 341: Norms and Normalization:  
The Theory and Practice of Social Control**  
Summer 2004

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**Course Description:** What are social norms? How do social norms operate? Why do we conform to social norms? How do individuals influence one another to cooperate and/or conform and why? What social benefits are secured through the operation of social norms? What are the costs to individuals and to social groups of the enforcement of norms? In this course, we will bring sociological and philosophical perspectives to bear on these and related questions about social norms. We will begin with sociological research that examines how norms are produced through ongoing social interaction at the microlevel. Next, we will consider the theory of communicative action offered by Jürgen Habermas, who understands social norms as that which enables individuals to coordinate their interactions. We will then turn to a consideration of the sociological research on social control. This will be followed up with a discussion of Michel Foucault's critique of normalization. Finally, we will consider some concrete examples of societal normalization, including the disciplining of women's bodies and constraints on sexuality in contemporary western societies.

**Course Requirements:**

Regular attendance and participation in class discussions.

3-page discussion of breaching experiment. Due July 1 in class.

Description of social norms in specific context and analysis of social control implications. 20-30 minute in-class presentation and 5-page write-up. Presentations will be on Thursdays, starting July 22. Sign up sheet available on June 29.

20-25 page research paper, on a topic of your choosing, in consultation with the instructors. Due August 31.

**Required Texts (available at Wheelock Books):**

Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*

Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*

Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, volume 1

Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction*

Michael Hechter and Karl-Dieter Opp, editors. *Social Norms*

Michael Warner, *The Trouble with Normal*

Rose Weitz, ed. *The Politics of Women's Bodies*

Additional readings will be made available in the Philosophy (201 Thornton) and Sociology (112 Silsby) department offices.

## **Tentative Schedule:**

### Week 1:

6/24 Introduction to course

### Week 2: Social Norms in Everyday Life

6/29 Harold Garfinkel. 1964. "Studies of the Routine Grounds of Everyday Activities" *Social Problems* 11(3): 225-250.

Thomas McCarthy. 1994. "On the Pragmatics of Communicative Reason." Chapter 3 in Hoy and McCarthy, Critical Theory. Blackwell Publishers.

7/1 reports on breaching experiments due.

### Week 3: The emergence and operation of social norms

7/6 Hechter and Opp, chapter 1

Jon Elster. 1989. "Social Norms." Chapter 3 in The Cement of Society. Cambridge University Press.

7/8 Hechter and Opp, chapter 5

Van Maanen, John. 1991. "The Smile factor: Work at Disneyland." Pp. 58-76 in Reframing Organizational Culture, edited by Peter Frost, Larry Moore, Meryl Louis, Craigh Lundberg, Joanne Martin. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

### Week 4: Habermas: Social norms and action coordination

7/13 Habermas. 1973. "Technology and Science as Ideology." Pp. 81-120 in Toward a Rational Society. Beacon Press.

Habermas. On the Pragmatics of Social Interaction, pp. 1-65, and 107-170.

7/15 Habermas continued

### Week 5: Social norms and social control

7/20 Lecture on social sanctions and group mediated control

Hechter and Opp, chapter 10

7/22 presentations

### Week 6: Foucault: Disciplinary power and normalization

7/27 Foucault, Discipline and Punish

7/29 presentations

Week 7: The social control of women's bodies

8/3 Weitz, chapters 2, 3, 8, 9, 11, 12 and 16  
Bordo, parts 2 and 3

8/5 presentations

Week 8: Foucault: Biopower

8/10 Foucault, History of Sexuality volume 1  
Foucault, Society Must be Defended, lectures 1, 2 and 10

8/12 presentations

Week 9: Sexual normalization

8/17 Warner, The Trouble with Normal

8/19 presentations

Week 10: Conclusion

8/24 conclusion

8/31 Final papers due.