

Chapter 5

Archaeology of Knowledge: Michel Foucault (French philosopher) practiced Archaeology to uncover how historical concepts like "sanity" and "criminality" were constructed into accepted "truths."

The Power Shift: Modern history marks a structural shift from Sovereign Power (the right to punish/kill) to Disciplinary Power (the administration and management of life).

Knowledge/Power Nexus: Knowledge is never neutral. Knowledge creates Power, and Power creates Knowledge.

The Loop: Institutions define people through "Knowledge" in order to exercise control over them ("Power").

Regimes of Truth: Systems, institutions, and discourses that decide which ideas are accepted as "True" or valid in a society.

Discourse: A formal system of thought that governs what can be said, thought, or written about a given subject.

The Language Barrier: You must use the required vocabulary of a discourse to be heard. For example, you cannot talk about physics using the vocabulary of poetry.

Institutionalization: Discourses are not just words; they are backed by concrete material institutions like schools, prisons, clinics, and courts.

Case Studies in Discourse:

Expat vs. Refugee: The label "Expat" signals economic opportunity, while "Refugee" implies a social burden. The "Knowledge" (the label) directly creates the "Power" (how they are legally treated and welcomed/detained).

The Courtroom: Only the lawyer and judge possess a valid, recognized discourse. The gallery must remain silent, illustrating who is allowed to speak.

The Power of Silencing: Every discourse makes certain ideas invisible. If a society only discusses "Profit," it systematically silences the discourse of "Ethics."

Chapter 6

Biopower Defined: A form of power that manages, regulates, and optimizes life and populations at the biological level (reproduction, birth/death rates, public health, sexuality, disease) instead of threatening death.

The Optimization Goal: Making the individual body healthy, productive, and a useful "asset" for the state.

Normalizing Judgment: The process through which institutions (like schools) create a rigid "standard" of what a "good/normal student" looks like.

The Dynamic: Students falling outside this norm receive disciplinary interventions (detention, therapy).

Internalized Discipline: Ultimately, you begin to monitor, self-correct, and police yourself because you have deeply internalized the societal "norm."

Historical Case Studies in Madness & Gender:

Madness and Civilization: In the Middle Ages, "fools" were viewed as possessing a unique, alternative wisdom. By the 18th century, a rising Medical Discourse redefined them as "mentally ill" to isolate and control them within specialized institutions.

The Hysterized Female Body: In the 19th century, medical discourse claims the female body was inherently unstable and "hysterical." This "objective scientific truth" was used to justify keeping women out of politics and education, claiming they must remain under the natural supervision of a husband or doctor.

The Panopticon: Designed by Jeremy Bentham as an 18th-century prison, Foucault uses it as a core metaphor for modern society.

Invisible & Omnipresent: The goal is to make power invisible but constantly felt. Because the inmates never know exactly when they are being watched, they police themselves.

Social Gaze: We constantly perform internal expectations (like gender roles) because we feel the permanent gaze of society.

Post-9/11 Discourse & Exceptional Measures:

Knowledge Production: Following Sept 11, media and "experts" produced a specific discursive category profiling the Muslim man as "irrational" and "violent."

The Discursive Category: Millions of unique individuals were replaced by a single reductionist label: "Potential Terrorist."

The State of Exception: Defining this group as "irrational" and "beyond reform" meant regular laws did not apply to them. This production of knowledge directly justified exceptional biopolitical measures like Guantanamo Bay.

Lila Abu-Lughod's Critique: Analyzed how post-9/11 political discourse weaponized women's rights as a tool for war.

The Binary Split: Dividing the world into the "Violent Oppressor" (the Muslim man) and the "Silent Victim" (the Muslim woman).

Imperial Power: Framing military intervention as a humanitarian "rescue mission" rather than geopolitics to secure moral justification and control.

Chapter 8

The Critique of Classic Marxism: Classic Marxism focused almost exclusively on the factory wage-laborer, ignoring the Invisible Labor taking place in the home that makes the worker's labor possible in the first place.

The Domestic Sphere: Capitalism relies heavily on the home to provide the next generation of workers (bearing and raising children) and emotional/physical sustenance for the current worker.

Silvia Federici & Housework: Author of *Wages Against Housework* (1975), Federici argued that domestic labor produces the most essential capitalist commodity of all: labour-power itself.

The Ideological Trick: Idealizing housework as a natural "labor of love" obscures its reality as unwaged, highly exploitative work.

Political Strategy: Demanding wages for housework was a strategy to make the hidden, unwaged foundation of capitalism visible.

Lise Vogel's Social Reproduction Theory: In *Marxism and the Oppression of Women*, Vogel analyzed biological differences without falling into essentialism.

The Capitalist Dilemma: Capitalists need women's factory labor, but they also need women to reproduce the future workforce.

The Biological Reproduction Penalty: During pregnancy and lactation, a woman's immediate capacity to provide "surplus labor" for the employer temporarily decreases. In a strict capitalist logic, this makes her "costly," resulting in lower wages and lower workplace tracks as a systemic penalty.

Social Reproduction Theory (Tithi Bhattacharya): The activities, emotional care, and institutions necessary to maintain and reproduce human life and labor-power on both a daily and generational basis.

The Paradox: Capital absolutely requires social reproduction to survive, but its profit-driven nature perpetually devalues and underfunds it.

The Three Pillars: Biological (bearing children), Daily (cooking, cleaning, care), and Socialization (education, cultural integration).

Angela Davis on Race, Class, and Gender: In *Women, Race & Class* (1981), Davis demonstrated that systems of oppression are deeply interlocking and cannot be analyzed in isolation.

The Bourgeois Myth: The idealized Victorian ideology of the woman as an "angel in the peaceful domestic house" was a luxury available only to wealthy white women. Enslaved Black women never had a protected domestic sphere; they were brutally exploited in the fields exactly like men.

The Critique of White Feminism: Isolating gender from race and class only serves the interests of middle-class white women. Historically, some white suffragists even sought the vote as a strategic means to maintain white supremacy.

Chapter 9

Reproduction as a Biopolitical Site: Foucault argued that sexuality and reproduction became central targets of modern Biopower because they allow the state to manage population growth, demographic composition, and economic productivity.

The Legal Framework of Roe v. Wade (1973): Landmark U.S. Supreme Court case that legalized abortion based on a woman's constitutional Right to Privacy. It established a distinct Trimester Framework:

1. **First Trimester:** Zero state control; the reproductive choice belongs strictly to the pregnant woman and her medical doctor.
2. **Second Trimester:** The state can regulate the abortion procedure, but only to protect the health of the mother (no outright bans allowed).
3. **Third Trimester:** The fetus reaches Viability (ability to survive outside the womb). The state gains full power to regulate, restrict, or completely prohibit abortion, except when it is deemed strictly necessary to save the mother's life.

The Capitalist & Conservative Re-framing: In the late 1970s and early 1980s, right-wing religious leaders (e.g., Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority) transformed abortion into a strategic political tool to mobilize conservative voters. They shifted the public discourse from a "medical/privacy issue" into a strict "moral and religious imperative" tied to traditional family values.

Critical Critiques of Roe v. Wade:

Abstract Right: Privacy laws frame abortion as an abstract personal choice but completely ignore material reality, failing to guarantee public funding or remove structural economic barriers.

Medical Gatekeeping: Roe did not grant absolute female autonomy; it placed abortion under strict Medical Surveillance, requiring formal medical approval.

Stratified Reproduction & Material Barriers:

The Hyde Amendment (1976): Blocked federal public funding (Medicaid) from covering abortions, creating an immediate, severe economic barrier for low-income women and women of color.

Stratified Access: Abortion quickly became a material privilege accessible primarily to wealthy individuals who had the financial resources to travel long distances, pay private fees, and take time off work.

The Overturning of Roe (2022): The U.S. Supreme Court eliminated the constitutional right to abortion, handing full power back to individual states to restrict or completely criminalize it.

Mass Criminalization: Abortion became a crime overnight in numerous states, legally punishing doctors, suppressing medical information, and stripping individuals of Bodily Autonomy (the fundamental right stating that every individual owns their own physical body).

The Pro-Choice Arguments:

Public Health: Banning abortion does not stop the practice; historically, it forces individuals into dangerous, illegal back-alley procedures, drastically escalating maternal injury and death.

Economic Impacts: Forced pregnancy directly disrupts education, stalls career advancement, and limits financial independence, locking marginalized families into systemic cycles of poverty.

Contraceptive Realities: No birth control method is 100% effective, making accidental pregnancy a structural issue rather than a matter of individual blame.

International Case Studies in Abortion Law:

Ireland & The 8th Amendment (1983): Legally equated the life of the fetus with the life of the mother, enforcing a complete ban on abortion even in cases of rape, punishable by life imprisonment.

The Case of Savita Halappanavar (2012): A tragic turning point where a woman died in an Irish hospital from sepsis after being denied a life-saving abortion during a definitive miscarriage. The resulting public outrage, massive protests, and international critique forced the state to dismantle its biopolitical bans and move toward legalization.

Islamic Jurisprudence & The 120-Day Rule: In Islamic legal thought, life is sacred, but permissibility is linked to the exact timing of Ensoulment (the entry of the soul into the fetus).

The Majority View: Most scholars agree ensoulment occurs at 120 days (4 months). Before this threshold, abortion is more legally permissible under specific conditions (such as severe health risks to the mother or fatal fetal abnormalities).

The Minority View: A stricter scholarly minority places ensoulment at 40–42 days, restricting abortion access almost entirely after the first month.

Codification in Muslim-Majority Countries:

Kuwait & Saudi Arabia: Highly restrictive. Kuwait permits abortion strictly up to 120 days only to save the mother's life or in proven cases of severe, fatal fetal disabilities. This represents a clear biopolitical alignment of state law with religious jurisprudence to regulate bodies.

Tunisia: One of the most liberal frameworks in the region; abortion is fully legal on request up to 12 weeks, and later if health is threatened.

Turkey: Abortion is legal on request up to 10 weeks.

Kazakhstan & Azerbaijan: Fully legal on request up to 12 weeks, and extendable for socioeconomic or health reasons.

Chapter 11

The Male Gaze Theory (Laura Mulvey, 1975): Classic cinema is structurally engineered to force the entire audience (regardless of their actual gender or orientation) into adopting a heterosexual, masculine perspective.

Objectification: Women on screen are systematically stripped of human agency, character depth, and narrative control. They are reduced entirely to "to-be-looked-at-ness"—functioning as passive objects for visual and sexual consumption.

The Active/Passive Binary: Visual pleasure in patriarchy is split into a rigid binary:

Active Male: The one who looks, drives the narrative, and controls the action.

Passive Female: The static spectacle who is looked at and consumed.

Key Cinematic Techniques of the Gaze:

Body Fragmentation: The camera isolates specific body parts (legs, lips, chest) through close-ups, slicing a whole human being into fragmented, sexualized pieces.

Narrative Freeze: When a highly sexualized female character enters the frame, the narrative progression of the story completely stops. The plot pauses purely to accommodate male Scopophilia (the psychological pleasure in looking at an object).

The Tripartite Gaze: Mulvey identifies three distinct layers of looking that cinema seamlessly blends into one dominant masculine viewpoint:

1. The look of the Camera filming the scene.
2. The look of the Male Character within the movie (the on-screen proxy who normalizes staring at the female body).
3. The look of the Audience sitting in the theater consuming the final product.

Voyeurism vs. Neutral Looking: Neutral looking is mutual, public, and balanced. Voyeurism is a structural exercise of patriarchal power where an active subject secretly watches, objectifies, and consumes a person without their consent or balance.

Case Study: Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954): The textbook cinematic proof of Mulvey's theory.

The Audience Proxy: Jeff (the protagonist) is physically immobilized in a wheelchair, perfectly mirroring the passive cinema audience sitting in a dark theater. We merge completely with his camera lens.

The Gaze as Surveillance Power: Looking is explicitly tied to biopolitical control. The active male holds the telephoto lens of surveillance, turning his neighbors and women into passive specimens under his eye.

The Objectification of Lisa: Grace Kelly's character is initially introduced as a highly stylized, passive fashion spectacle. She lacks initial narrative depth, existing purely to be looked at by Jeff and the audience.

Alternative Gazes:

The Female Gaze: A cinematic counter-approach that completely rejects body fragmentation and objectification. It centers female subjectivity, focusing deeply on internal emotions, psychological depth, and mutual desire.

The Oppositional Gaze (bell hooks): A foundational theory introducing race into cinema. It represents a conscious refusal by marginalized viewers (specifically Black women) to accept patriarchal, white-centric visual consumption. It demands that the camera view characters as whole human beings and invites true political empathy.