

Read *Discipline and Punish*, “The body of the condemned” (pp. 3-31 in most editions)

1. On pp. 23-4 Foucault outlines “four general rules” that his book will follow. (What are they?) Overall, he says, he’s going to:

Try to study the metamorphosis of punitive methods on the basis of a political technology of the body in which might be read a common history of power relations and object relations. Thus, by an analysis of penal leniency as a technique of power, one might understand both how man, the soul, the normal or abnormal individual have come to duplicate crime as objects of penal intervention; and in what way a specific mode of subjection was able to give birth to man as an object of knowledge for a discourse with a ‘scientific’ status. [24]

After reading the section, go through this quote and paraphrase it in your own words.

2. Foucault starts with two examples: the public torture and execution of Damiens in 1757, and the prison timetable of Faucher from 1837. These examples, he tells us, define contrasting “penal styles,” the transition between which was made in this historical period. How, over the next twenty pages or so, does Foucault characterise this shift?

- Suggestion: take the following keywords and describe how Foucault relates them to the old and new paradigms: body; soul; pain; spectacle; crime; the criminal; power; “political technology of the body.”

Questions to ponder:

In his closing paragraphs, Foucault refers to recent “prison revolts.” How does he characterise their motivation? What can you infer about Foucault’s views on the contemporary “criminal justice system” from this introductory section of his book?

Foucault claims to be analysing “the disappearance of punishment as a spectacle.” After Abu-Ghraib, the execution of Saddam Hussein, the televisualization of war, or the popularity of semi-public criminal executions in the US (for example), do you feel confident that we *are* living in an age where punishment (especially torture and execution) is no longer spectacular?

Foucault says that he is beginning an outline of “a political technology of the body.” What do you think he means?