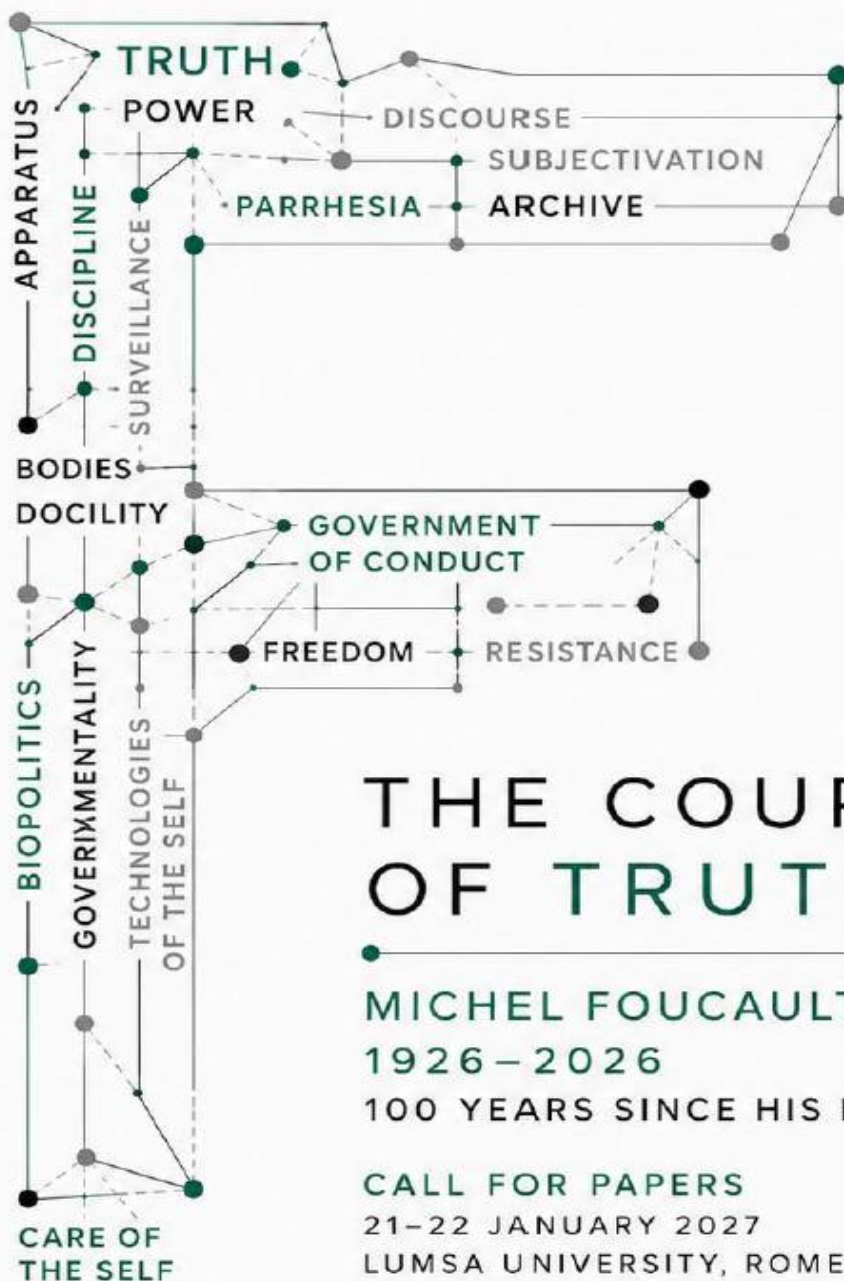




THE COURAGE OF TRUTH

MICHEL FOUCAULT

1926 – 2026

100 YEARS SINCE HIS BIRTH

CALL FOR PAPERS

21–22 JANUARY 2027

LUMSA UNIVERSITY, ROME

Organized by the Department of Human Sciences and the Contemporary Humanism PhD Program at LUMSA University, and by the Italian Association of Sociology, with the sections "Gender Studies", "Sociological Theories and Social Transformations", and "Political Sociology".

CALL FOR PAPERS

Born on 15 October 1926, Michel Foucault would be 100 years old today. An eclectic scholar and controversial figure on the French cultural scene, Foucault delivered his final lecture at the Collège de France in 1984, exploring the practices and forms of discourse through which the subject might come to speak the truth about themselves. The *courage of truth* lies with the speaker who takes the risk of expressing, despite everything, the whole truth that is in their mind; and it is also the courage of the listener, who agrees to accept as true the outrageous truth they have heard.

From 1980 onwards, Foucault had significantly reoriented his research, shifting from the individual as an object of domination and surveillance to the subject of truth; more specifically, to the process through which the individual constitutes and recognises themselves as a subject. The volumes of **The History of Sexuality**, written in his later years, also explore the forms, techniques and games of truth through which the individual constitutes themselves as a subject capable of governing themselves and, by extension, of governing others. Foucault presents a history of the ethical issues that arise from the techniques of the self—those reasoned and voluntary practices through which individuals seek to transform themselves, to modify their individuality, and to make their lives a work that expresses certain values and meets specific criteria regarding lifestyle.

Throughout his intellectual journey, Foucault also developed one of the most influential critiques of modernity, challenging the linear narrative of progress and demonstrating how modern institutions, forms of knowledge and social practices are permeated by apparatuses of power that produce historically determined forms of subjectivity. His thinking made a decisive contribution to the renewal of contemporary social theory, bringing to light a conception of power no longer understood as merely the prerogative of the state or sovereignty, but rather as a widespread network of relationships, practices and technologies that give substance to institutions. In this sense, his thought represents one of the main points of reference in the post-structuralist debate and continues to offer analytical categories – such as discipline, biopolitics, governmentality, apparatuses and processes of subjectivation – that are fundamental to understanding the transformations of contemporary societies and to the renewal of the social sciences and humanities. Central to his work is the tension that runs through it: between the technologies of discipline – that power which, through norms and surveillance, produces docile or subjugated bodies – and the technologies of the self, the practices through which the subject constitutes itself by acting upon itself. These two axes



intertwine precisely within governmentality, a highly topical issue: does self-care, in the new forms it takes today, open up a space of freedom, or is it a shift in the governance of behaviour?

In honouring the legacy of Foucault, the conference aims to critically and reflectively take stock of the current state of research: how are subjectivities and the Self constructed, between power and emancipation, in today's world? Are the social sciences and humanities still 'receptive' to his theoretical proposals? To what extent does his critique of modernity continue to provide a key to interpreting contemporary social transformations and new configurations of power? Does the appeal to the value of 'humanity' and the human continue to be significant, or, as Foucault argued, does it serve rather to justify the most disparate realisations? In contemporary societies, how is the relationship between power, truth and governmentality changing? In the age of thinking machines, what is the relationship between the body and technology, and how does it involve the sexed and gendered body? What is the relationship between truth and democracy in an era of crisis for epistemic authorities? If power is no longer the prerogative of the state but a widespread network of relationships and mechanisms, where does sovereignty lie today, and how are representation and conflict redefined when governance is exercised over conduct and life? If governing means directing conduct, what forms of subjectivation does neoliberal governmentality produce today – in which the individual has now become an entrepreneur of the self – and what counter-conducts emerge where people no longer wish to be governed in this way? These are just some of the questions that may now be raised by a re-reading of the work of a scholar who, at every stage of his intellectual journey, positioned himself at a transdisciplinary crossroads within the humanities.

Building on the framework outlined above, with this *call for papers* we invite scholars to submit contributions addressing, in particular but not exclusively, the following themes:

- interpreting the critique of modernity: Michel Foucault's contribution to the development of contemporary social theory and the post-structuralist debate;
- biopolitics, governmentality and capitalism in the digital society;
- truth, intellectuals and power in the post-truth era;
- parrhesia and democracy: speaking the truth as a political practice and the crisis of epistemic authorities;
- neoliberal governmentality, the governance of conduct and the self-entrepreneurial subject;



- political subjectivation, counter-conducts and forms of resistance to government;
- surveillance, security and algorithmic governmentality in democratic societies;
- current applications of the genealogical-critical method in the humanities and social sciences

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GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PROPOSAL

Opening date for submission of proposals: 29 July 2026

Guidelines for submitting proposals: a maximum of 500 words and no more than 5 keywords, in addition to the proposer's first name, surname, affiliation and email address. The paper must be submitted in .pdf format to the following email address:
conferencefoucault@gmail.com

Deadline for submission of proposals: 30 September 2026

Notification of proposal acceptance: 15 October 2026

For enquiries:

Conference Scientific Committee

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