This term we will be considering the rise of the individual. It is argued that processes of modernity have atomised societies and given rise to the dawn of individualism. As the concept of community increasingly crumbles in the modern imagination the significance of the self is heightened. In the Western world the dominance of neo-liberal politics has led to identity and social status being popularly understood as outcomes of a series of choices made by individuals acting freely within democratic societies. How is the rise of the individual addressed, understood and explained within social theory? This will be the focus of our discussions this term.

The group will meet on six evenings during this term with a suggested reading acting as a catalyst for the discussion. See below for the provisional schedule:

**27th February 2014 – Session One: Anthony Giddens**


*Discussion Point: How does modernity impact the stability of self-identity?*

**20th March 2014 – Session Two: Michel Foucault**


*Discussion Point: Is self-improvement a matter of agency or structure?*
10th April 2014 – Session Three: Nikolas Rose

Reading: Miller & Rose (2008) Governing the Present: Chapter 8 ‘Governing Advanced Liberal Democracies’

Discussion Point: Individuals can be governed through their freedom to choose

15th May 2014 – Session Four: Zygmunt Bauman


Discussion Point: Are freedom and security irreconcilable and does an attempt to achieve both inevitably lead to a sense of individual isolation?

5th June 2014 – Session Five: Erving Goffman

Reading: Goffman (1959) The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life: Chapter 1 ‘Performances’

Discussion Point: Is an individual the sum of multiple acts determined by social settings?

26th June 2014 – Session Six: Pierre Bourdieu

Reading: Bourdieu (1984) Distinction: Chapter 3 ‘The Habitus and the Space of Life-Style’

Discussion Point: Is the pursuit of distinction individualising?