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First developed by Michel Foucault more than thirty years ago, "governmentality" has become an essential set of tools for many researchers in the social and political sciences today. What is "governmentality"? How does this perspective challenge the way we understand political power and its contestation? This new introduction offers advanced undergraduate and graduate students both a highly accessible guide and an original contribution to debates about power and governmentality.

The book aims to serve four main functions:

To situate governmentality as an intellectual development within Foucault's thinking about the microphysics of power and his genealogical methods;

To reveal how research in governmentality has changed as the idea encounters new academic fields, political contexts and regional settings;

To examine one of the more recent encounters between governmentality and the social sciences - its interaction with international relations and global politics;

To offer researchers some methodological suggestions for undertaking studies in governmentality, stressing that its critical edge becomes blunted if it is detached from historical/genealogical modes of inquiry.

This book offers a set of conceptual and methodological observations intended to keep research in governmentality a living, critical thought project. Above all, it argues that the challenge of understanding the world calls for the addition of new thinking equipment to the governmentality toolbox. Governmentality: Critical Encounters will prove useful for students of social and political theory, international relations, political sociology, anthropology and geography.