

102 – Mapping critical theory: from the Frankfurt School to nowadays

Instructor: Roberto Fineschi

Office Hours: By appointment

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Course Description

The class introduces the student to Critical Theory through an analysis of its birth and development. Starting with the most important representatives of the Frankfurt School and their interpretation of Marx, we will move to post-war critical thinkers, and their diverse approach to social investigation. An introduction to contemporary currents such as postmodernism, feminism, race and postcolonialism will allow the student to become familiar with the most innovative and advanced anti-mainstream thinking.

The course will be based on lectures on the respective themes and authors and followed by group discussions and paper presentations. Students will be introduced to crucial concepts of the Western political tradition in different historical periods.

Prerequisites

No particular prerequisite. Familiarity with historical and political studies.

Course Hours

The course meets twice a week for a total of 45 contact hours. Suggested credits: 3.

Student Learning Expectations

A comprehension of the most important principles of critical theory in its historical development.

Course Outline

Week by Week Description:

Week I.

1) Course introduction.

Read: Hand-out.

2) Marx's critique of bourgeois society. Intro.

Read: Communist manifesto. Selected pages.

Week II.

1) Marx's theory of structure and superstructure. The concept of ideology.

Read: Preface to A contribution to the critique of political economy

2) Marx's theory of fetishism

Read: Capital book 1 (selected pages).

Week III.

1-2) Frankfurt school. Historical Contours

Read: How, pp.13-42

Week IV.

1) Frankfurt school. Rationalisation as Reification

Read: How, 63-88.

2) Critical Theory, the Family and the Narcissistic Personality

Read: How, 90-111.

Week V.

1) Overcoming the Impasse: Habermas's Reconstruction of Critical Theory.

Read: How, 115-142.

2) An overview on some Western marxist and post-marxists theorists: workerism and post-workerism (Negri). Harvey.

Read: Keucheyan, 79-93, 103-108.

Week VI.

- 1) Review.
- 2) Midterm exam.

Week VII.

- 1) Critical Thinking after World War II. 1
Read: Keucheyan, p. 7-32
- 2) Critical Thinking after World War II. 2
Read: Keucheyan, p. 33-50.

Week VIII.

- 1) Foucault 1
Read: Gutting (selected pages).
- 2) Foucault 2
Read: Gutting (selected pages).

Week IX.

- 1) Postmodernism
Read: Malpas-Wake, p. 115-126.
- 2) Structuralism, post-structuralism, Deconstruction
Read: Malpas-Wake, p. 43-54, 81-90.

Week X.

- 1) Feminism, gender and queer theory 1
Read: Malpas-Wake, p. 112-114.
- 2) Feminism, gender and queer theory 2
Read: Keucheyan, p. 189-200.

Week XI.

1) Race and postcolonial theories.

Read: Malpas-Wake, p. 127-140.

2) Final review

Week XII.

Research paper due.

Final Exam

Assignments:

Every week students have to study the materials assigned by the teacher. They will be asked to write papers or personal comments and present those in class.

Midterm and final exam can include multiple choice questions, open questions, short essays.

Textbook and required materials:

- Karl Marx, , Capital A Critique of Political Economy Volume One, Penguin, 1990. ,
- Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Communist Manifesto, Oxford University Press, 1992.
- The Routledge Companion to Critical Theory, Edited by Simon Malpas and Paul Wake, Routledge, 2006.
- Alan Hoe, Critical Theory, Palgrave, 2003.
- Razmig Keucheyan, The Left Hemisphere. Mapping Critical Theory Today, Verso, 2013.
- Gary Gutting, Foucault. A Very Short Introduction, Oxford University Press, 2005

Grading System

Attendance and Participation	30%
Weekly papers	20%

Midterm exam	25%
Final essay	25%

Every week, students will be asked to write a feedback paper or to produce a short essay on the topics considered in class.

Midterm and final exam can include multiple choice questions, open questions, short essays.

Course Policy

Academic Integrity:

Effective learning, teaching and research all depend upon the ability of members of the academic community to trust one another and to trust the integrity of work that is submitted for academic credit or conducted in the wider arena of scholarly research. Such an atmosphere of mutual trust fosters the free exchange of ideas and enables all members of the community to achieve their highest potential.

In all academic work, the ideas and contributions of others must be appropriately acknowledged, and work that is presented as original must be, in fact, original. Faculty, students, and administrative staff all share the responsibility of ensuring the honesty and fairness of the intellectual environment at the Siena Art Institute and Siena School for Liberal Arts.

Students with documented disabilities:

Any student who has a documented disability that may prevent him or her from fully demonstrating his or her abilities should contact the instructor as soon as possible to discuss accommodations necessary to ensure full participation and to facilitate the educational opportunity.

Participation and Attendance:

We consider attending class a crucial part of gaining the most from your study abroad experience. For this reason, we allow only **one unexcused absence** per course during the 15 weeks of the program. This means that you are only allowed to miss **one** lesson of each course for unexcused reasons. Reasons for an absence to be considered unexcused include

absences related to personal travel (including delays, strikes, missed connections, etc.) or visits from family and friends.

In addition, being late to class on **4** occasions constitutes an unexcused absence. Please also consider that leaving before the end of the lesson or coming back late from a break is the equivalent of an unexcused absence.

Participation and attendance is worth 30% of the overall grade for every class.

Absences due to health-related issues are considered excused if the student informs the professor and office by email or phone before class begins.

No make-up exams or critiques will be considered unless warranted by extreme circumstances [for example, health, family tragedy] supported with proper documentation.