

**University of Guelph
Department of Philosophy
Winter 2014**

PHIL 3230 Issues in Social and Political Philosophy: Introduction to Critical Theory

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Office: MacKinnon 339
Office Hours: Monday 13:00-15:00
Class Meets: Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:30-12:20, MINS 103

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

In this class we will investigate the unbreakable bond between the philosophical findings of the Frankfurt School and its socio-political context. We will focus on the multiple-level mutuality between the political history and its philosophical articulation. The goal of this class is not only to point out examples where power and knowledge intertwine, but also to suggest the impossibility of understanding and analyzing them separately. Only within this analytical frame can we estimate the success of Critical Theory in its refutation of the totalizing core it ascribes to modernity and Western metaphysics overall. If we recognize that the thematic alternatives to the mind-body, inner-outer, self-world polarities are essentially the insights into the limitations of reason, can we, conversely, suggest that the ruthless theoretical examinations of the limitations of reason open up the path for the practice, which transcends the above-mentioned dualisms? We will especially focus on the authors of Critical Theory in their reflections upon Weimar Germany, National Socialism, and the period after WWII. Particularly important are the insights of Critical Theory about the connection between science and ideology, capitalism and totalitarian trends, and the exclusivist core of the Enlightenment project.

The following questions are crucial for this class: What is the crisis of Enlightenment and how do we raise the question of its overcoming? What constitutes the privileged role of the critique of ideology? How did the devastating experience of wars, Holocaust and totalitarianisms of the 20th century shape its philosophical currents? What is the role of the aesthetic narratives in the self-disclosure of the totalitarian practices?

We will begin this class by providing an overview of the philosophical significance of Kant, Hegel, and Marx for Critical Theory within the context of its critical examination of the Enlightenment project. In the second part of the course we will carefully study Adorno's, Horkheimer's, and Kracauer's reflections upon the culture industry, mass media, and the relationship between art and totalitarian regimes. We will spend the rest of the class examining the basic concepts of Critical Theory in the texts by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.

Assigned readings:

Immanuel Kant: *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1983); selections

G.W.F. Hegel: *Reason in History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1988); selections

Karl Marx: *The German Ideology* (New York: International Publishers, 1970); selections

Theodor Adorno: *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Continuum, 1995), *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); selections

Max Horkheimer: *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum, 2004); selections

Siegfried Kracauer: *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995); selections

Movies:

“Triumph of the Will”, (Leni Riefenstahl, 1935, excerpts); in class

“Shoah”, (Claude Lanzmann, 1985, excerpts); in class

“Predictions of Fire”, (Michael Benson, 1996, excerpts); in class

“The Testament of Doctor Mabuse”, (Fritz Lang, 1933); evening movie

“Metropolis”, (Fritz Lang, 1927); evening movie

Supplementary texts:

Martin Jay: *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (London: Heinemann, 1976).

Andrew Arato, ed.: *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1985).

Recommended readings:

Hannah Arendt: *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (New York: Penguin, 2006)

Peter Sloterdijk: *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

Michel Foucault: *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995).

ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS:

This course is going to be focused on the close exploration of the assigned readings. The question of the philosophical foundations, possibilities, and the limitations of the Enlightenment project remains one of the most challenging philosophical problems, and it requires close and extensive readings of pivotal philosophical texts of the 18th, 19th and 20th century. However, once you reach the understanding of the basic premises of the relationship between ideas and their socio-historical context, theories, and their intertwinement with the power principle, you are expected to successfully trace various modifications of this relationship throughout the class.

In your papers you will need to show that you are able to grasp the most important ideas and intentions of the assigned texts. Furthermore, you will be required to critically evaluate the position you analyze, and to be able to relate it to other texts discussed in class. I will insist on the clarity of your writing, but most importantly, I will be looking for your ability to synthetically grasp the main intention of the text.

Evaluation:

You will be assigned three essays with the following structure and timeframe:

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| First essay (January 29) | %30 |
| Second essay (March 1) | %30 |
| Final essay (April 16) | %40 |

These are all take-home essays, and the first two essays are expected to be 5-6 pages (12 point font, double spaced). The final essay should be 8 pages (12 point font, double spaced). You will be required to choose one among 3-4 essay questions, which will be available on the CourseLink, at least two weeks before the submission deadline. Late papers will be penalized at a rate of -10% per day, unless you provide me with the official note from a doctor.

OTHER EXPECTATIONS

Students are expected to come to the class having read the assigned readings. Although the lectures are designed to illuminate and clarify issues, themes, and problems of the texts, it is crucial that students closely engage with the course material.

Laptops and other electronic devices are allowed in the classroom, but it is your duty to make sure not to distract other students.

SCHEDULE OF READINGS:

PART 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT PROJECT

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| JAN 6 M | COURSE INTRODUCTION |
| JAN 8 W | KANT: "What is Enlightenment" (<i>Perpetual Peace and Other Essays</i> , pp. 41-49) |
| JAN 10 F | KANT: "Idea for an Universal History With A Cosmopolitan Intent" (<i>Perpetual Peace and Other Essays</i> , pp. 29-41) |
| JAN 13 M | HEGEL: "Reason in History" (<i>Introduction to the Philosophy of History</i> , pp. 12-19) |
| JAN 15 W | HEGEL: "Freedom, the Individual, and the State" (pp. 19-40) |
| JAN 17 F | HEGEL: "Freedom, the Individual, and the State" (pp. 40-60) |
| JAN 20 M | HEGEL: Conclusion |
| JAN 22 W | MARX: <i>German Ideology</i> , (pp. 42-60) |
| JAN 24 F | MARX: <i>German Ideology</i> , (pp. 64-95) |

PART 2: CRITICAL THEORY AND WEIMAR GERMANY; REFLECTIONS UPON CULTURAL INDUSTRY AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM

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| JAN 27 M | MARX: Conclusion; Marx's influence on Critical Theory |
| JAN 29 W | HORKHEIMER: "Traditional and Critical Theory" (<i>Critical Theory</i> , pp. 188-244)*; First essay due |
| JAN 31 F | HORKHEIMER: "Traditional and Critical Theory" - continuation |
| FEB 3 M | HORKHEIMER: "Means and Ends" (<i>Eclipse of Reason</i> , pp. 3-40); "The Revolt of Nature" (<i>Eclipse of Reason</i> , pp. 63-87) |
| FEB 5 W | Movie – Leni Riefenstahl: "The Triumph of The Will" (excerpts); KRACAUER: "Conflict with Reality" (<i>From Caligari to Hitler</i> , pp. 297-303)*; "Cult of Distraction" (<i>The Mass Ornament</i> pp. 323-331); HORKHEIMER: "Authoritarian State" (<i>The Essential Frankfurt School Reader</i> , pp. 95-118)* |
| FEB 7 F | ADORNO: "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda" (<i>The Essential Frankfurt School Reader</i> , pp. 120-137)* |

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| FEB 10 M | KRACAUER “The Mass Ornament” (<i>The Mass Ornament</i> , pp. 75-89) Evening Movie – Fritz Lang: “Metropolis”, KRACAUER: ”The Stabilized Period” (<i>From Caligari to Hitler</i> , pp. 149-150, 162-164)* |
| FEB 11 T | Evening Movie – Fritz Lang: “Testament of Dr. Mabuse” |
| FEB 13 W | KRACAUER “The Group as Bearer of Ideas” (<i>The Mass Ornament</i> , pp. 143-173) |
| FEB 15 F | ARENDT: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> * (excerpts) |

Reading Week (Feb. 17-24)

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| FEB 24 M | ADORNO: “Education after Auschwitz”, <i>Critical Models</i> (pp. 191-204)*; CHRISTOPHER BROWNING: <i>Ordinary Men</i> , (excerpts from the chapters 3,4,7 and 8); Movie – Claude Lanzmann: “Shoah” (excerpts); |
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PART 3: CRITICAL THEORY – BASIC CONCEPTS

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| FEB 26 W | HORKHEIMER & ADORNO, <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> : “The Concept of Enlightenment” (pp. 1-35) |
| FEB 28 F | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 1 S | Second Essay due |
| MAR 3 M | DOE: “Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment” (pp. 35-63) |
| MAR 5 W | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 7 F | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 10 M | DOE: “The Culture Industry” (pp. 94-137) |
| MAR 12 W | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 14 F | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 17 M | DOE: Continuation |
| MAR 19 W | DOE: “The Elements of Anti-Semitism” (pp. 137-173); Reflections upon cynical reason with the discussion of the artistic collective Neue Slowenische Kunst; excerpts from the movie “Predictions of Fire” by Michael Benson |

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| MAR 21 F | DOE: Continuation; Michael Benson: “Predictions of Fire” (excerpts) with the brief reference to the work of John Heartfield |
| MAR 23 M MAR 25 W | ADORNO, <i>Negative Dialectics</i> : “Introduction”, pp. 1-15 ND: Intro, pp. 15-35; PETER SLOTERDIJK, <i>Critique of Cynical Reason</i> : “Meditation on the Bomb” (pp. 128-139, excerpts) |
| MAR 27 F | ND: Intro, pp. 35-57; PETER SLOTERDIJK, <i>Critique of Cynical Reason</i> : “Unshamed Happiness”(pp. 124-128, excerpts) |
| MAR 31 M APR 2 W APR 4 F | ND: “Concept and Categories” (pp. 135-157) ND: Continuation (pp. 157-186) ND: Continuation (pp. 186-207); Conclusion - possibilities and limitations of Critical Theory |
| APR 16 W | Final essay due |

* these texts are available on the CourseLink.

8 STANDARD STATEMENTS OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS WINTER 2014

E-mail Communication

As per University regulations, all students are required to check their **uoguelph.ca** e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the university and its students.

When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons, please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, ID#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for Academic Consideration:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-ac.shtml>

Drop Date

The last date to drop one-semester **Winter 2013** courses, without academic penalty, is

March 7, 2014. For regulations and procedures for Dropping Courses, see the Undergraduate Calendar:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-drop.shtml>

Copies of out-of-class assignments

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Each student at the University of Guelph has rights which carry commensurate responsibilities which, broadly, being a civil and respectful member of the University community. The Rights and Responsibilities are detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:
<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c14/c14-strightsrespon.shtml>

Academic Misconduct

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and enjoins all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. The Academic Misconduct Policy is detailed in the Undergraduate Calendar:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/c08/c08-amisconduct.shtml>

Recording of Materials

Presentations which are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded in any electronic media without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a classmate or guest lecturer.

Resources

The Undergraduate Calendar is the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate programs. It can be found at:

<http://www.uoguelph.ca/registrar/calendars/undergraduate/current/>

If you find yourself in difficulty, contact the undergraduate advisor in your program, or the BA Counseling Office: <http://www.uoguelph.ca/baco/contact.shtml>