CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY:
THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL CRITICISM

SPRING 2002
KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais
Philosophy Department
Kalamazoo College
Humphrey House #202
Telephone # 337-7076
Offices Hours:
1) Mon. 11:30 - 1:30.
2) Tues. 11:30- 12:30.
3) By Appointment.

COURSE GOALS:

This course in an introduction to contemporary research within the European-Continental tradition of thought known as the “Frankfurt School of Social Criticism” or, more generally, “Critical Social Theory.” We will examine recent proposed models of how critical social inquiry should be understood. The abiding aim of this tradition is to develop a philosophical model of society that maintains, for social inquiry, a conceptual link between knowledge about and practical engagement with social reality. We begin by studying Habermas’s first formulation of this type of inquiry in Knowledge and Human Interest and then proceed to his most recent work, The Theory of Communicative Action. We will then turn to Axel Honneth’s alternative, Neo-Hegelian model of social development, which proposes the ideal of “undamaged identities,” not Habermas’s ideal of “undistorted communication,” as the primary aim of a rational society. Throughout the course, examples from U.S. social movements -- the ecology, feminist and multicultural movements -- will be used to assess the relative strengths of these different models to address contemporary social crises.

EVALUATION:

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<th>TYPE OF EVALUATION</th>
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Class Participation: Seminar presentations, classroom discussion and email correspondence 10%

Midterm Examinations 2 @ 20% = 40%
Quizzes 5 @ 5% = 25%
Final Paper (10-15 pages) 1 @ 25% = 25%

POLICIES:

Open, respectful and critical discussion is crucial to the success of this seminar. Quizzes offer students, teacher, and teaching assistant alike the opportunity to identify and to clarify central terms/concepts. The midterm examinations test comprehension of key philosophical issues and arguments, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

TEXTS:


4. Course Packet:

   1. From Situating The Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics (Routledge, New York 1992):

       (1) “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Juergen Habermas” Benhabib, Seyla [1992]:


       (1) “Author’s introduction.”

       (2) “Integrity and Disrespect.”

       (3) “Decentered Autonomy.”

(1) “Patterns of Intersubjective Recognition: Love, Rights, and Solidarity.”

(2) “Personal Identity and Disrespect: The Violation of the Body, the Denial of Rights, and the Denigration of Ways of Life.”

READING SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION: THE CRITIQUE OF INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY:

TUES: Week One

2. The Idea of a Critical Social Theory.

THUR:


HABERMAS’S EARLY EPISTEMOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY:

TUES: Week Two

1. “Knowledge and Human Interests” (McCarthy, 53-126)

THUR:

1. “Knowledge and Human Interests” (Cont.)
2. Discussion.

HABERMAS’S RECONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL MATERIALISM:

TUES: Week Three

2. “Understanding and Social Inquiry” (McCarthy, 137-162).

THUR:

1. “Psychoanalysis and Social Theory” (McCarthy, 193-213).
THE THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION:

TUES:  
1. “Rationality, Social Theory and Political Philosophy” (White, 1-48).

THUR:  
1. “Rationality, Social Theory and Political Philosophy” (White, 1-48) [Cont.]

WEBER’S THEORY OF RATIONALIZATION AND HABERMAS’S THEORY OF SOCIAL EVOLUTION:

TUES:  
1. Translator's Introduction (Habermas v-xxxix).
2. “Occidental Rationalism” (Habermas, 143-187).

THUR:  
2. Discussion.

FORMAL PRAGMATICS: COMMUNICATIVE AND STRATEGIC RATIONALITY:

TUES:  “Social Action, Purposive Activity, and Communication” (Habermas, 272-339).  
THUR: Movie: Glengarry Glen Ross.

TUES:  
1. “Social Action, Purposive Activity, and Communication” (Cont.).
2. “Justice and the Foundation of Communicative Ethics” (White, 48-69).

THUR:  

DISCOURSE ETHICS AND FEMINIST CONCERNS:

TUES:  
1. “The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited” (Benhabib).
2. “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Juergen Habermas” Benhabib, Seyla [1992]:


discourse ethics and feminist concerns:

TUES:  
1. “The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited” (Benhabib).
2. “Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Juergen Habermas” Benhabib, Seyla [1992]:

http://kzoo.edu/phil/ContContS02.html
3. Evening Movie: Oleana.

**UNDISTORTED COMMUNICATION AND UNDAMAGED IDENTITIES: TWO COMPETING IDEALS OF CRITICAL THEORY AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE?**

**THUR:**

1. “Author’s introduction” (Honneth).
2. “Integrity and Disrespect” (Honneth).

**TUES: (Continued):**

**Ten**

1. “Author’s introduction” (Honneth).
2. “Integrity and Disrespect” (Honneth).

**THUR:**

1. “Personal Identity and Disrespect: The Violation of the Body, the Denial of Rights, and the Denigration of Ways of Life” (Honneth).
2. “Decentered Autonomy” (Honneth).
3. Student Evaluations.

**FINALS WEEK**

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This page currently maintained by [Chris Latiolais](http://kzoo.edu/phil/ContContS02.html)

Please direct any questions or comments to the [Chair](http://kzoo.edu/phil/ContContS02.html) of the Educational Policies Committee.

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