CONTEMPORARY CONTINENTAL PHILOSOPHY
CRITICAL SOCIAL THEORY

LECTURE NOTES:

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais, Chair
Philosophy Department
Kalamazoo College
Humphrey House #201
Telephone # 337-7076

- Mon. 8:00 - 10:00.
- Tues. 10:30- 11:30.
- 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. After reviewing the first and the second historical phases of the Frankfurt School, we begin our study of contemporary critical social theory by examining Habermas’s first formulation of this type of inquiry in Knowledge and Human Interest. We then proceed to his most recent work, The Theory of Communicative Action. Finally, we will examine Axel Honneth’s alternative, Neo-Hegelian model of social development, which proposes the ideal of “undamaged identities” as the primary aim of a rational society, which is an alternative to Habermas’s ideal of “undistorted communication.” 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:

Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, vocabulary quizzes, midterm examinations and a final paper.

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<tr>
<th>TYPE OF EVALUATION</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation: Seminar presentations, classroom discussion and email correspondence</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quizzes</td>
<td>6 @ 5% = 30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Assignments (10-15 pages)</td>
<td>2 @ 30% = 60%</td>
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POLICIES:

Students are expected to follow the reading schedule and come to class prepared to actively discuss the texts they have read. More specifically, students must bring their texts to class with marginal notes and highlighted passages of particular importance. Quizzes offer students the opportunity to identify and clarify central terms and concepts. The midterm assignments allow students to write essays on 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. Late papers will be marked down a half grade for the first day and a full grade for the second day. All work must be turned in at the end of term, unless alternative assignments have been given by the instructor.

TEXTS:

- Course Packet:
  - From Situating The Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics (Routledge, New York 1992):
    - "Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition and Juergen Habermas" Benhabib, Seyla [1992]:
“Author’s introduction.” “Integrity and Disrespect.”
“Decentered Autonomy.”
- “Patterns of Intersubjective Recognition: Love, Rights, and Solidarity.”
- “Personal Identity and Disrespect: The Violation of the Body, the Denial of Rights, and the Denigration of Ways of Life.”

**READING SCHEDULE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**TUES:**
- Course Mechanics
- The Idea of a Critical Social Theory.

**HISTORICAL PHASES OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL OF SOCIAL THEORY:**

**THUR:**
- Introduction (Held)
- "The Formation of the Institute of Social Research" (Held, 29-40)

**TUES:**
- "Class, Class Conflict and the Development of Capitalism: Critical Theory and Political Economy" (Held, 40-77)

**THUR:**
- "The Culture Industry: Critical Theory and Aesthetics" (Held, 77-111)
- Discussion.
- Quiz #1

**TUES:**

**THUR:**
- "Horkheimer's Formulation of Critical Theory: Epistemology and Method 2" (Held, 175-200)
- Quiz #2

**TUES:**
- "Adorno's Conception of Negative Dialectics: Epistemology and Method 2" (Held, 200-223)

**THUR:**
- "Marcuse's Notion of Theory and Practice: Epistemology and Method 3" (Held, 223-249).
- Quiz #3

**TUES:**
- "Introduction to Habermas" (Held, 249-260)
- "Discourse, Science, and Society" (Held, 260-296)

**THUR:**
- "Interest, Knowledge, and Action" (Held, 296-330)
- "The Reformulation of the Foundations of Critical Theory" (Held, 330-353)
- Quiz #4

**HABERMAS'S THEORY OF COMMUNICATIVE ACTION:**

**TUES:**
- "An Assessment of the Frankfurt School and Habermas" (Held, 353-379)
- "Rationality, Social Theory and Political Philosophy" (White, 1-25).
- "Action, Rationality, and Normative Discourse" (White, 25-48)
- "The Idea of a Universal Pragmatics” (McCarthy, 272-291) [Recommended]
THUR:
- “Justice and the Foundation of Communicative Ethics” (White, 48-69).
- “Toward a Minimal Ethics and Orientation for Political Theory” (White, 69-90).
- Quiz #5

TUES:  

- “Communicative Reason, Modernity and Contemporary Capitalism” (White, 90-128).
- Movie: Glengarry Glen Ross.

THUR:
- “The Two Tasks of Critical Theory” (White, 129-155)
- Quiz #6

DISCOURSE ETHICS AND FEMINIST CONCERNS:

TUES:  

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

THUR:
- Review and Discussion:

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

TUES:  

- “Author’s introduction” (Honneth).
- “Integrity and Disrespect” (Honneth).
- “Patterns of Intersubjective Recognition: Love, Rights, and Solidarity” (Honneth).

THUR:
- “Personal Identity and Disrespect: The Violation of the Body, the Denial of Rights, and the Denigration of Ways of Life” (Honneth).
- “Decentered Autonomy” (Honneth).

TUES:  

- Review and Discussion

THUR:
- Review and Discussion

FINALS WEEK