

Fall, 2009
International and Intercultural Studies 80
Office: Broad Center 213
Office Hours: W, Th, 1:30-2:30
website: <http://bernard.pitzer.edu/~jparker/>

Pitzer College
Joe Parker
Phone: 74318 (office)
18218 (message)
(626) 808-0385 (home)
email: joe_parker@pitzer.edu

Introduction to Critical Theory

Critique is a sign of privilege. Poor people need a next step.
Rigoberta Menchú

Course Purpose and Topics:

A survey of social and cultural theoretical critiques at an introductory level, this course will prepare students for advanced level critical thinking, interdisciplinary solution building, and social change work. We will begin with theoretical frameworks in established fields of social critique, such as Marxism, feminism, anticolonialism, cultural studies, critical race theory, critical legal/justice studies, and women of color theory. The course also introduces emerging postmodern theories in postcolonial studies, poststructuralist feminism, post-Marxism, border studies, and queer theory. Suitable for first and second-year students, as well as upper level students who feel they have not yet been sufficiently exposed in their education to critical, interdisciplinary, and/or theoretical thinking.

Course Requirements:

You are responsible for the learning process in this class. To accomplish this you will be expected 1) to complete the assigned readings before coming to class, 2) to contribute active, informed, and constructive discussion, and 3) to attend class regularly. You will be asked to think through the sometimes difficult material with fellow students and the instructor in open exploratory discussions, and these class discussions will be a major part of the learning process for the course. Your grade will be determined as follows: attendance, preparation, and daily discussion, 40%; a quiz (on key terms) 15%; a short essay (on critical theory) 15%; a 10-12 page final paper (graduate students 25-30 page), 30%.

Note: Students with learning or physical disabilities will be given reasonable accommodations. If you need to request accommodations or other assistance, contact the Academic Support Services Office, extension 73553. Students who do not give their sources for ideas and information not their own or common knowledge are practicing plagiarism; they will be given one chance to rewrite the paper and correct the problem, and if it is not corrected they will not receive credit for the assignment.

Required Readings: (All readings are on Sakai or Honnold library reserve; texts may be purchased at Huntley bookstore)

Belsey, Catherine, Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction, Oxford Univ. Pr.

Chow, Rey, Writing Diaspora: Tactics of Intervention in Contemporary Cultural Studies, Indiana U. Pr.

Foucault, Michel, Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-77, ed. Colin Gordon
Pantheon, 1980.

Lorde, Audre, Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches Crossing Press, 1984.

McRuer, Robert, Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability, New York Univ. Pr., 2006.

Torfinn, Jacob, New Theories of Discourse: Laclau, Mouffe, and Žižek, Blackwell, 1999.

Sakai Readings – see list at end of syllabus.

Recommended Textbooks: (Also available at Honnold library reserve and Huntley bookstore.)

Fanon, Frantz, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Markmann, Grove Pr.

Freud, Sigmund, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, Norton.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, The Portable Nietzsche, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann, Penguin.

Tucker, Robert, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed., Norton.

Reading and Assignment Schedule:

(Readings in textbooks are marked with an asterisk (*); all others are from Sakai/reserve readings, except for recommended readings (marked with a ►.)

Week 1 Course Introduction: Why be Critical?

Sept. 1-3 Readings: Handout (Simic).
*Lorde, "Poetry is not a Luxury," 36-39.
Hamilton, "The Enlightenment," 20-44.

Week 2 What is Critical Theory?

Sept. 8-10 Readings: Fraser & Nicholson, "Social Criticism without Philosophy," 19-38.
Chow, "The Resistance of Theory," 95-105.

Week 3 Modernity I: Saussure and the End of Stable Meanings/Languages.

Sept. 15-17 Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 1, p. 1-22 & Ch. 2 (part), p. 23-31.
Barthes, "Theory of the Text," 31-47.

Week 4 Modernity II: Marx and the End of Stable Classes/Nations.

Sept. 22-24 Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 2.
► Marx/Tucker, "Wage, Labour, and Capital," 203-217.

Sept. 22 Short Essay Due: What is Critical Theory?

Week 5 Modernity III: Nietzsche and the End of Stable Truths/Discourses

Sept. 29- Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 3.
Oct. 1 ► Nietzsche, Portable Nietzsche, 443-46, 450-54, 499-505.

Week 6 Modernity IV: Freud and the End of Stable Identities/Voices

Oct. 6-8 Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 3 (cont.).
► Freud, Jokes, "Jokes, Dreams, and the Unconscious," 215-238.

Week 7 The End of the Modern?

Oct. 13-15 Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 4.
Derrida, "Structure, Sign, and Play," 35-57.

Oct. 20 Happy Fall Break.

Week 8 Caribbean Talks Back I: Fanon & the End of Classical Races/Colonialisms

Oct. 22 Readings: *Belsey, Poststructuralism, Ch. 5.
► Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks, 7-14, 17-40.

Week 9 Caribbean Talks Back II: Lorde & the End of Stable Genders/Sexualities

Oct. 27-29 Readings: *Lorde, 40-44, 53-59, 110-33.
Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," 227-54.

Oct. 29 Key Terms Quiz.

Week 10 Rethinking Power and the Subject.

Nov. 3-5 Readings: *Foucault, Power/Knowledge, "Two Lectures," 78-108.
Davies, "The Concept of Agency," 42-53.

Week 11 Rethinking Power and the Subject (cont.) & Theorizing the Other.

Nov. 10-12 Readings: *Foucault, Power/Knowledge, "Truth and Power," 109-133.
*Chow, Writing Diaspora, Intro., 1-26.

Course Schedule (cont.)

Week 12 Theorizing the Other (cont.) & Discourse Theory.

Nov. 17-19 Readings: *Chow, Ch. 5, 99-119.

*Torfing, New Theories of Discourse,

Recommended: *Chow, Ch. 6, 120-43.

Week 13 Discourse Theory (cont.).

Nov. 24 Readings: *Torfing, New Theories of Discourse,

Nov. 24 Final Paper Topic Due.

Nov. 26 Happy British Imperialism Day.

Week 14. Disability Theory.

Dec. 1-3 Readings: *McRuer, Foreword, Intro., Ch. 1 & Epilogue, vii-xi, 1-32, 199-208.

Week 15 Impossible Closure?

Dec. 8-10 Readings: *Lorde, "Man Child," 72-80.

Mon, Dec. 14, 5 pm Papers Due. (Time of scheduled final exam)

Sakai Readings

- Hamilton, Peter, "The Enlightenment and the Birth of Social Science," in Stuart Hall, et al., ed., Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies, Cambridge, MA: The Open University/Blackwell Publishers, 1996. p. 20-47.
- Fraser, Nancy and Linda J. Nicholson, "Social Criticism without Philosophy: An Encounter between Feminism and Postmodernism," Feminism/Postmodernism, Ed. Linda J. Nicholson, New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 19-38.
- Chow, Rey, "The Resistance of Theory; or, The Worth of Agony," in Just Being Difficult? Academic Writing in the Public Arena, Ed. J. Culler and K. Lamb, Stanford Univ. Pr., 2003, 95-105.
- Davies, Bronwyn. "The Concept of Agency: A Feminist Poststructuralist Analysis." Social Analysis. 30 (1991): 42-53.
- Barthes, Roland, "Theory of the Text," Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader, ed. Robert Young, Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 31-47.
- Marx, Karl, "Wage, Labour, and Capital," in Tucker, Robert, ed., The Marx-Engels Reader, 2nd ed., Norton, 203-217.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich, The Portable Nietzsche, ed. And trans. Walter Kaufmann, Penguin, 443-46, 450-54, 499-505.
- Freud, Sigmund, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, Norton, 215-38.
- Fanon, Frantz, Black Skin, White Masks, trans. Markmann, Grove Pr., 7-14, 17-40.
- Derrida, Jacques, "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences," in Twentieth Century Literary Theory: An Introductory Anthology, ed. Vassilis Mambropoulos and David Neal Miller, State University of New York Press, 1987, 35-57.
- Butler, Judith, "Gender Insubordination," in Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, David M. Halperin, The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, Routledge, 1993, 307-20.
- Rich, Adrienne, "Compulsory Heterosexuality," in Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale, David M. Halperin, The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, Routledge, 1993, p. 227-54.