

Critical Theory – Immanent Critique

PHIL 343 / CRN 17326
MW 2-3:50
VOL 307

Dr. Rocío Zambrana
zambrana@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: M 4-6
and by appointment
PLC 331

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to Critical Theory. We will examine the idea of immanent critique developed within three generations of the Frankfurt School. We will begin by discussing Horkheimer's interdisciplinary approach to immanent critique during the 1930s, and move on to examine Horkheimer and Adorno's account of the dialectic of enlightenment during the 1940s. We will then examine the turn to normative theory distinctive of Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action and discourse ethics specifically during the 1980s. Finally, we will examine post-Habermasian approaches to immanent critique at the turn of the 21st century via Axel Honneth's concept of recognition and Nancy Fraser's norm of parity of participation. Throughout, we will assess notions of social suffering and reification, reason and rationalization, justice and justification at work in this tradition of social thought.

Primary Texts:

1. Course Pack (CP)
2. Jürgen Habermas, *Jürgen Habermas On Society and Politics: A Reader* (HSP)
3. Axel Honneth and Nancy Fraser, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange* (RR)

Texts are available for purchase at the Duckstore; CP is available on Blackboard.

Course Structure, Requirements, and Policies:

Participation:

Lectures will presuppose familiarity with the text. We will often do group work in class, thus coming prepared to discuss the assigned text is essential and, indeed, required.

Attendance:

You are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. More than 3 absences will result in a failing final grade, unless proof of illness or emergency is provided.

Written Work:

~You will hand in three 4-page essays – one on each generation of the Frankfurt School. The short essays must succinctly reconstruct an argument within the chosen text(s). They should also critically assess the argument that you have reconstructed.

~You will also be required to submit a 3-page reading response on Marx and Lukács, and a 3-page reflection on immanent critique.

Please see schedule of readings for due dates. ***Papers are due in class and via SafeAssign. The final reflection on immanent critique is due in the Philosophy Department and via SafeAssign by 2pm.*** No late papers will be accepted, unless accompanied by proof of illness or emergency.

Guidelines for papers:

- clarity: the paper should have a clearly defined topic and focus.
- accuracy: the paper should present an author's position in a fair way.

- assessment: the paper should evaluate the author’s position, and bring to bear on the text or issue your own view; you must defend your view.

All of your work must be typewritten (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced). You will be expected to cite philosophical texts that you are quoting, paraphrasing, or using as reference appropriately, including secondary literature and online resources.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional unacknowledged use of someone else’s work as one’s own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, and so on). Plagiarized material may be derived from books, journals, Internet postings, student or faculty papers, and so on including the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. *Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course.* For more information, see: <http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>.

Grading Standard:

- A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
- B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
- C = OK. Some errors, but basic grasp of the material.
- D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
- F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or complete lack of effort.

Grading:

Participation	10%
Essays (3)	60% (20% each)
Reading Response	15%
Final Reflection	15%

Accommodation for a Disability:

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon.

Classroom Etiquette:

Please turn off cellular telephones for the duration of the class. Twitter, Facebook, and texting are not permitted. You may be asked to leave the classroom and will be considered absent if engaging in these activities.

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Schedule of Readings:

Wk. 1

- Mon., Sept. 26 On the Very Idea of Immanent Critique: Introduction to the course and syllabus
- Wed., Sept. 28 Karl Marx, excerpts from *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, *The German Ideology*, and “The Fetishism of Commodity and the Secret Thereof,” from *Capital* in CP

Wk. 2

- Mon., Oct. 3 Georg Lukács, “Reification and Consciousness of the Proletariat,” Part 1 in CP
- Wed., Oct. 5 Max Horkheimer, “Traditional and Critical Theory,” in CP
Reading Response on Marx and Lukács due

Wk. 3

- Mon., Oct. 10 Max Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory," in CP
Wed., Oct. 12 T.W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, "Preface" and "The Concept of Enlightenment," in CP

Wk. 4

- Mon., Oct. 17 cont. Adorno and Horkheimer
Wed., Oct. 19 Jürgen Habermas, "Social Action and Rationality," in HSP
Essay 1 on First Generation due

Wk. 5

- Mon., Oct. 24 Habermas, "The Concept of the Lifeworld and the Hermeneutic Idealism of Interpretive Sociology," and "The Uncoupling of System and Lifeworld," in HSP
Wed., Oct. 26 cont. Habermas

Wk. 6

- Mon., Oct. 31 Habermas, "Marx and the Thesis of Internal Colonization," in CP
Recommended: Nancy Fraser: "What's Critical About Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender," OR
Wed., Nov. 2 Habermas, "Discourse Ethics: Notes on a Program of Philosophical Justification," in CP

Wk. 7

- Mon., Nov. 7 cont. Habermas
Wed., Nov. 9 Axel Honneth, "The Social Dynamics of Disrespect," in CP
Essay 2 on Second Generation Due

Wk. 8

- Mon., Nov. 14 Nancy Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics," in RR
Wed., Nov. 16 cont. Fraser

Wk. 9

- Mon., Nov. 21 Axel Honneth, "Redistribution as Recognition," in RR
Wed., Nov. 23 cont. Honneth

Wk. 10

- Mon., Nov. 28 Fraser, "Distorted Beyond All Recognition" and Honneth, "The Point of Recognition," in RR
Wed., Nov. 30 Closing Discussion
Essay 3 on Third Generation Due

Finals Week

- Mon., Dec. 5 **Due: Final Reflection: What is Immanent Critique?**

Guidelines for an Analytical and Critical Reading and Writing:¹

1. **The Argument:**

Reading: What is this author arguing?

How does the author defend his/her argument or his/her position?

Writing: In your words, explain the concept, problem, or debate discussed by the author. State the premises that he/she offers as evidence for his/her view on the matter. Make explicit all implicit assumptions. You are presenting the author's position to the reader so you must try to do so in a fair way. Use citations when appropriate.

2. **Contextual Criterion:**

Which tradition or debate is this author engaging?

What is his/her view on the tradition or position on the debate?

3. **Dialogic Criterion:**

Do you agree or disagree with the author?

Have you studied another perspective on this issue that is more compelling?

4. **Pragmatic Criterion:**

What are the implications or consequences of this position? Would you be willing to endorse these?

Is there a practical end to this argument? Can we think of practical applications of the argument to contemporary moral and social problems?

5. **Logical Criterion:**

What are this argument's premises?

What are the implicit presuppositions?

Is the argument valid?

6. **Substantive Criterion:**

What other points can be made and examples can be offered in order to strengthen or refute the argument? Feel free to use the work of another author *discussed in class*.

¹ Based on class handout, Héctor Huyke, University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez; originally from Angel Villarini, *Manual para la enseñanza del desarrollo del pensamiento* (San Juan, PR: PELL, 1991).