Social Theory II

This course will provide an overview of contemporary social theory, with an emphasis on critical or radical theoretical perspectives. Among the questions to be addressed are: Does Marxism provide an adequate theoretical foundation for the critique and transformation of capitalist society? What are the critical theoretical alternatives within and beyond Marxism? What are the limitations of Marxism as a theory of human liberation and how have other radical theoretical perspectives addressed these limitations? How does critical social theory inform sociological research and political practice?

Evaluation will be based primarily on class participation. Each week each student will be asked to introduce and lead discussion on a specific topic or question focused on one or more primary readings. In addition, students are required to submit three brief “though papers” during the course of the term (maximum length of 8 pages each) that explore, critique, extend, or apply the theoretical concepts encountered in one or more readings for a specific week. The first of these is due no later than our class meeting on Week 4; the second no later than Week 7; and the third no later than Week 10. Further details about my expectations for these papers will be provided at our first meeting.

I encourage you to purchase David Held, Introduction to Critical Theory, and George Ritzer, Postmodern Social Theory, which we will use extensively. Other required readings will be made available on reserve or in Xerox or PDF format. Further details about gaining access to the readings will be provided at our first class meeting.

Course Readings (*asterisk indicates required reading)

Week 1. Introduction (January 11)

No readings.

Week 2. The Origins of Western Marxism (January 18)

*Georg Lukacs, History and Class Consciousness, pp. 1-26, 83-110.
*Carl Boggs, Gramsci’s Marxism, chapters 1-3.
Eduard Bernstein, Evolutionary Socialism.
Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, The Young Lukacs and the Origins of Western Marxism.
Andrew Feenberg, *Lukacs, Marx, and the Sources of Critical Theory.*
Istvan Meszaros, *Lukacs’ Concept of Dialectic.*
Joseph Femina, *Gramsci’s Political Thought.*
Ann Showstack Sassoon, ed., *Approaches to Gramsci.*
Chantal Mouffe, ed., *Gramsci and Marxist Theory.*
Christine Buci-Glucksmann, *Gramsci and the State.*

**Week 3. The Frankfurt School and Critical Theory (January 25)**

Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination.*
Phil Slater, *The Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School.*
Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity.*
Perry Anderson, *Considerations on Western Marxism.*
Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory.*
Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment.*
Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution.*
Herbert Marcuse, *Negations.*
Jurgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests,* appendix.
John B. Thompson and David Held, eds., *Habermas: Critical Debates.*
Craig Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere.*
Tom Rockmore, *Habermas on Historical Materialism.*
Steven K. White, *The Recent Work of Jurgen Habermas.*

**Week 4. The Positivism Debate (February 1)**


**Week 5. Structuralist Marxism and Its Critics (February 8)**

Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes.*
Nicos Poulantzas, *Classes in Contemporary Capitalism.*
Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism.*
Simon Clarke et al., *One-Dimensional Marxism: Althusser and the Politics of Culture.*
Week 6. Analytical Marxism and Rational-Choice Theory (February 15)

Erik Olin Wright, *Classes*, especially chapters 1-4.

Week 7. The Marx-Weber Debate (February 22)

Bryan S. Turner, *For Weber*.
Frank Parkin, *Marxism and Class Theory: A Bourgeois Critique*.

**Week 8. Postmodernism and Its Critics (February 29)**

*George Ritzer, *Postmodern Social Theory* (chapters 1, 3-6, 9, 12).
*Pauline Marie Rosenau, *Post-Modernism (chap. 1,7,8).*
Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*.
Jean Baudrillard, *The Mirror of Production*.
Jean Baudrillard, *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*.
Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*.
Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*.
Alex Callinicos, *Against Postmodernism: A Marxist Critique*.
Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory*.
Roy Boyne and Ali Rattansi, eds., *Postmodernism and Society*.
David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*.
Jurgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.
Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*.
Bryan S. Turner, ed., *Theories of Modernity and Postmodernity*.
Andrew Ross, ed., *Universal Abandon? The Politics of Postmodernism*.
Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*.
Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*.
Barry Smart, *Foucault, Marxism and Critique*. 
**Week 9. Marxism, Feminism, and Postmodernism (March 7)**


*Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in Lydia Sargent, ed., *Women and Revolution.***

*Jane Humphries, “Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working-Class Family” in Anthony Giddens and David Held, eds., *Class, Power, Conflict.*


Michele Barrett, *Women’s Oppression Today.*


Annette Kuhn and AnnMarie Wolpe, eds., *Feminism and Materialism.*

Zillah Eisenstein, ed., *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism.*


Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory.*

Jane Flax, *Thinking Fragments: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and Postmodernism in the Contemporary West.*

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought.*


Hester Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced.*  

**Week 10. Theoretical Realism and the Wright-Burawoy Debate (March 14)**

*Erik Olin Wright et al., *The Debate on Classes,* chapter 2.


Andrew Sayer, *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach.*


Roy Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism.*

Roy Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation.*

Rom Harre, *Varieties of Realism.*

Jarrett Leplin, ed., *Scientific Realism.*

Garry Potter and Jose Lopez, eds., *After Postmodernism? Critical Realism.*

Russell Keat and John Urry, *Social Theory as Science.*