

CONF 804 -- 001

**ALTERNATIVE THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS:
CRITICAL THEORY AND SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION**

FALL TERM 2014

INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course is offered on Tuesdays at 4:30-7:10 pm in Room 310 of Founder's Hall. The **instructor** can be reached via telephone at 703-993-1307 or 703-400-7674 (cell) or via email at rubenstein.richard@gmail.com. His office is Room 5070, Metropolitan Hall, and office hours are by appointment. He is available to discuss either course-related matters or other matters of interest to students. All class members should join the S-CAR Community Forum group established for this course: CONF 804-001: Critical Theory Fall 2014.

The **purpose** of the course is to develop our understanding of violent and potentially violent systemic conflicts and the possible methods of resolving them. Associated aims are to familiarize students with the ideas generated by thinkers of the Critical Theory school and others who have extended or altered these ideas; to use these insights to deepen our understanding of serious social conflicts; to explore the implications of these theories for conflict resolution practice; and to do research, make presentations to the class, and write papers on topics of interest to the seminar.

The **style** of the course will be that of a graduate seminar, with students doing readings in common and independent reading. Students will also do independent writing and will present draft papers to the class.

With regard to course **content**, the structure of the seminar is as follows:

We begin by studying the sources of Critical Theory, in particular, Marx, Weber, Nietzsche, and Freud, and follow this with an overview emphasizing the historical context and major ideas of the Frankfurt School. We then read theorists chiefly concerned with transforming socio-political systems in the industrial or post-industrial democracies (Marcuse, Adorno, Bourdieu, Habermas). We continue by reading thinkers who analyze political discourse and power relations in relationship to cultural systems (Galtung, Foucault, Butler), and finish by studying theories of global system transformation (Zizek, Badiou). To the extent possible, we read original works of theory rather than commentaries on theorists. Throughout the

course, we ask how insights into the nature of structural and cultural violence may help us develop more meaningful and effective methods of conflict resolution.

Class **requirements** are as follows: Students are expected to attend each class thoroughly prepared to discuss the assigned readings. In addition, each student will read and review a book and/or essays supplemental to those listed in the syllabus as required. **Grades** will be based on a short essay on an issue discussed in the course readings and class (25%), a review and oral presentation to the seminar based on a supplemental reading (25%), and a final paper of 5000-7500 words (50%). Further specifications for the final paper will be supplied in class. All papers must be submitted on time. It is S-CAR's policy not to grant grades of Incomplete for reasons other than a documented medical or family emergency. Please see the schedule below for relevant dates and deadlines.

With regard to **process**, the structure is as follows: Most class sessions will begin with a short lecture by the instructor followed by class discussion. In certain weeks, there will also be brief student presentations or guest lectures. Students will submit short essays at midterm, review papers one week after making their class presentations, and final papers by the dates noted on the schedule below.

University Requirements

These are listed immediately below in language suggested by the Provost's Office. We will take time in the first class to discuss any questions that you may have about this material, including questions about plagiarism.

Academic integrity

GMU is an Honor Code university; please see the University Catalog for a full description of the code and the honor committee process. The principle of academic integrity is taken very seriously and violations are treated gravely. What does academic integrity mean in this course? Essentially this: when you are responsible for a task, you will perform that task. When you rely on someone else's work in an aspect of the performance of that task, you will give full credit in the proper, accepted form. Another aspect of academic integrity is the free play of ideas. Vigorous discussion and debate are encouraged in this course, with the firm expectation that all aspects of the class will be conducted with civility and respect for differing ideas, perspectives, and traditions. When in doubt (of any kind) please ask for guidance and clarification.

GMU email accounts

Students must activate their GMU email accounts to receive important University information, including messages related to this class.

Office of Disability Services

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see me and contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at 993-2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through the ODS. <http://ods.gmu.edu>

Other Useful Campus Resources

WRITING CENTER: A114 Robinson Hall; (703) 993-1200;
<http://writingcenter.gmu.edu>

UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES "Ask a Librarian"
<http://library.gmu.edu/mudge/IM/IMRef.html>

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;

COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES (CAPS): (703) 993-2380;
<http://caps.gmu.edu>

The UNIVERSITY CATALOG, <http://catalog.gmu.edu>, is the central resource for university policies affecting student, faculty, and staff conduct in university affairs.

Required books are as follows (for order of readings and other details, please see the schedule below). All are available at the Arlington Campus Bookstore. For **assigned articles**, see the schedule of assignments, below. Assigned articles and other materials, as well as comments by the instructor and classmates, will be placed on the S-CAR Community Forum group established for this course. PLEASE JOIN THE CONF 804-001 GROUP ON THE COMMUNITY FORUM RIGHT AWAY.

Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings*. Verso, 2012

Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Routledge, 2006

Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford, 2005

Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution and Other Writings*, Dover Publications, 2006

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Beacon 1991 OR

Karl Marx (Laurence H. Simon, ed.), *Selected Writings*, Hackett Publishing Co., 1994

Slavoj Zizek, *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, Verso, 2009

A partial list of **recommended books and articles** follows. These are not available at the Campus Bookstore but can be found in the George Mason Library system or in the John Burton Library. Check with Rich to see if he has a copy as well.

Theodore Adorno, "Reflections of Class Theory." In *Can One Live After Auschwitz?: A Philosophical Reader*, edited by Rolf Tiedemann, 93-110, Stanford University Press, 2003

Louis Althusser, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, Monthly Review Press, 2001

Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." From *Illuminations*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1968

Tom Bottomore, *The Frankfurt School and Its Critics*, Routledge, 2002

Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet: Trotsky*, 3 vols. esp. Vol. I: *The Prophet Armed*, Verso, 2009

Terry Eagleton, *Why Marx Was Right*, Yale, 2011

Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Vintage, 1990 and/or *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, 1995

Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2005 and/or *Black Skin, White Masks*, Grove Press, 2008

Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon, 1984 and/or *The Essential Foucault*. New Press, 2003

Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Holt 1992 and/or *Escape from Freedom*, Holt 1994

Sigmund Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, W.W. Norton, 1990

Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vols. I and II, Beacon, 1985 and/or *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, M.I.T. Press, 1991

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Harvard University Press, 2001

Max Horkheimer, "The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research." In *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, edited by Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner. Psychology Press, 1989

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Stanford University Press, 2002)

Vivienne Jabri, *War and the Transformation of Global Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010) and/or *The Postcolonial Subject* (Routledge, 2012)

Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: The History of the Frankfurt School*, University of California Press, 1996

Michael Kahn, *Basic Freud: Psychoanalytic Thought for the 21st Century*, Basic Books, 2002

Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989

Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, W.W. Norton, 2007

Vladimir I. Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin*, B.N. Publishing Co., 2009

Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, MIT Press, 1972

Noelle McAfee, *Habermas, Kristeva, & Citizenship*, Cornell University Press, 2000

Herbert Marcuse, *Toward a Critical Theory of Society*, Routledge, 2001

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Dover 2003

Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 3d Ed., Farrar Straus, 1980

Slavoj Zizek, *Violence: Big Ideas, Small Books*, Picador, 2007

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

(NOTES: All readings not on the required books list are posted on the Community Forum. Student presentations on independent readings will be scheduled early in the term. Movies will be shown at times convenient for class members to attend them.)

Aug. 26: **Intro to course: Do systems generate violence?** Read Richard E. Rubenstein, "Conflict Resolution and the Structural Sources of Conflict," in *Conflict Resolution: Dynamics, Process, and Structure*, ed. Ho-Won Jeong (Ashgate, 1999); and Johan Galtung, "Violence, Peace, and Peace Research," *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969), posted on Community Forum

Sep. 2: **Marx on socioeconomic transformation.** Read Karl Marx, essays from *Selected Works*, pp. 102-208, 301-314, Also recommended: pp. 54-97

Sep. 9: **Luxemburg on reform and revolution.** Read Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," from *Reform or Revolution and Other Writings*

Sep. 16: **Lenin vs. Weber on modernization** Read materials by and about Lenin and Weber posted on Community Forum

Sep. 23: **Freud and transformations of consciousness.** Read chapter from Terry Eagleton posted on Community Forum. FIRST ESSAY TOPICS DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL

Sep. 30: **The Frankfurt School and industrial society.** Read Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, materials on “One-Dimensional Society”

Oct. 7: MIDTERM ESSAYS RETURNED VIA EMAIL BY OPENING OF CLASS. View film, “La Guerre Est Finie”

Oct. 14: COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY

OCT. 21: **The Frankfurt School and repressive culture.** Read *either* “One-Dimensional Thought” from *One-Dimensional Man*, or selection from Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, or selection from Horkheimer and Adorno, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, both posted on Community Forum

Oct. 28: **Bourdieu and Habermas on forms of capital and communication.** Read *either* Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*, or Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital” and “Rethinking the State,” both posted on Community Forum

Nov. 4: **Foucault and the postmodern turn in social thought.** Read materials from Michel Foucault posed on Community Forum

Nov. 11: **Butler and radical feminism.** Read Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*
FIRST PRESENTATIONS OF BOOK REVIEWS

Nov. 18: **Critical theory and the empire question.** Read selections from Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, and Richard E. Rubenstein, “Conflict Resolution in An Age of Empire: New Challenges to an Emerging Profession,” in Sandole, Byrne, et al., Eds., *A Handbook of Conflict Resolution* (Routledge, 2008), both posted on Community Forum.

SECOND PRESENTATIONS OF BOOK REVIEWS

Nov.25: **Zizek, Badiou and the revival of critical thought.** Read Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* and watch Slavoj Zizek lecture on YouTube.

THIRD PRESENTATIONS OF BOOK REVIEWS

DEADLINE FOR CLEARING TOPICS FOR FINAL PAPERS

Dec. 2: **Concluding discussion: system transformation and conflict resolution.** What did we learn in this course? What didn’t we learn that we need to know?

Dec. 16: FINAL PAPERS DUE VIA EMAIL BY 5:00 P.M.