

CONF 804 -- 001

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

FALL TERM 2010

INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course is offered on Wednesdays at 4:30-7:10 in Room 250 of the Original Building. The **instructor** can be reached via telephone at 703-993-1307 or 703-400-7674 (cell) or via email at rrubenst@gmu.edu. His office is Room 646 Truland, and office hours are by appointment. He is available to discuss either course-related matters or other matters of interest to students.

The **purpose** of the course is to develop our understanding of violent structural 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, Marxism and Freudianism, and follow this with an overview emphasizing the historical context and major ideas of the Frankfurt School. We then read theorists chiefly concerned with conflict and socio-political development in the industrial or post-industrial democracies (Marcuse, Habermas). We continue by reading thinkers who analyze political discourse and power relations in the West (Foucault, Butler) and on a global scale (Zizek, Hardt and Negri). 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.

Students are expected to attend each class thoroughly prepared to discuss the assigned readings. In addition, each student will examine 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 in class discussions (20%), a review and oral presentation to the seminar based on a supplemental reading (20%), and a final paper of 5000-7500 words (60%). Further specifications for the final paper will be supplied in class. 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.

Honor Code and plagiarism:

All George Mason University students have agreed to abide by the letter and the spirit of the Honor Code. You can find a copy of the Honor Code at academicintegrity.gmu.edu. All violations of the Honor Code will be reported to the Honor Committee for review. With specific regards to plagiarism, three fundamental and rather simple principles to follow at all times are that: (1) all work submitted be your own; (2) when using the work or ideas of others, including fellow students, give full credit through accurate citations; and (3) if you are uncertain about the ground rules on a particular assignment, ask for clarification. If you have questions about when the contributions of others to your work must be acknowledged and appropriate ways to cite those contributions, please talk with the professor.

ICAR requires that all written work submitted in partial fulfillment of course or degree requirements must be available in electronic form so that it can be compared with electronic databases, as well as submitted to commercial services to which the School subscribes. Faculty may at any time submit a student's work without prior permission from the student. Individual instructors may require that written work be submitted in electronic as well as printed form. ICAR's policy on plagiarism is supplementary to the George Mason University Honor Code; it is not intended to replace or substitute for it.

Required books are as follows (for order of readings and other details, please see the schedule below). For **assigned articles**, see the schedule of assignments, below.

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

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

Michel Foucault, *The Essential Foucault*. New Press, 2003

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

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

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

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon 1991)

Karl Marx (Neil J. Smelser, ed.), *On Society and Social Change*, University of Chicago Press, 1973

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

A partial list of **recommended books** follows. Since students' academic backgrounds vary considerably, those familiar with a required book may want to read a recommended book as well.

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

Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Vintage, 1990; *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Knowledge*, Routledge, 1991; *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Vintage, 1995

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

Erich Fromm, *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Holt 1992; *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; *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, M.I.T. Press, 1991

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

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

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

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

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

Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, Routledge, 1987; *Toward a Critical Theory of Society*, Routledge, 2001

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

(NOTE: student presentations on independent readings are not listed in this schedule. They will be scheduled early in the term.)

Sep. 1: Intro to course. 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 "Sources," in Sandra Cheldelin, et al., *Conflict: From Analysis to Intervention* (Millennium, 2d Ed., 2008) (PDFs)

Sep. 8: Marxism and socioeconomic structures: read Karl Marx, *On Society and Social Change*

Sep. 15: Marxism and political change: read Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," from *Reform or Revolution and Other Writings*

Sep. 22: Psychoanalysis and psychological structures: read Michael Kahn, *Basic Freud: Psychoanalytical Thought for the 21st Century*

Sep. 29: The Frankfurt School synthesis: Read Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, pp. ix-122

Oct. 6: Complete Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* MIDTERM ESSAY TOPICS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS

Oct. 13: Late critical theory: read Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*

Oct. 20: The postmodern turn in social thought: read *The Essential Foucault* (specific essays to be assigned) MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE IN CLASS

Oct. 27: The postmodern turn in psychology: read *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan*

Nov. 3: Radical feminism: read Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (at least 1-106)

Nov. 10: Post-postmodernism (?) Read Slavoj Zizek. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*

Nov.17: View and discuss taped lecture of Zizek SUBMIT PROPOSALS FOR FINAL PAPERS

Nov. 24: THANKSGIVING RECESS

Dec. 1: The empire question. Read Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, chapters to be assigned (PDF) 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) (PDF)

Dec. 8: Implications of critical theories for conflict resolution. Read Johan Galtung, 'Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,' *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1969), pp. 167-191 and "Cultural Violence," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990), pp. 291-305 (PDFs).

Dec. 17 Final papers due by close of business at ICAR office