

CONF 804 -- 001

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

FALL TERM 2011

INSTRUCTOR: RICHARD RUBENSTEIN

SYLLABUS AND SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

This course is offered on Mondays at 4:30-7:10 in Room 467 of Founders Hall. 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. All class members should join the S-CAR Community Forum group established for this course: CONF 804: Critical Theory and System Transformation.

The **purpose** of the course is to develop our understanding of violent and potentially 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, Marx, Weber, 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 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 finish by studying theories of global 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 (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. 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;

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<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.

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

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

Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Knowledge*, Routledge, 1991;

Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution and Other Writings*, Dover Publications, 2006. [This book is also available free on line.]

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

Eros and Civilization, Routledge, 1987

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** follows. Some are available at the Campus Bookstore but all 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.

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

Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet: Trotsky* (3 vols.), Verso, 2009

Constantine Douzinas and Slavoj Zizek, eds., *The Idea of Communism*, Verso, 2011 (reviewed by R.E. Rubenstein in *Unrest*, Issue # 4)

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

Michel Foucault, *A History of Sexuality, Vol. I*, Vintage, 1990; *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

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

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

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

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

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

V.I. Lenin, *Essential Works of Lenin*, bnpublishing, 2008

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

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.)

Aug. 29: 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, posted on Community Forum. If you have not read Johan Galtung, "Structural Violence," also posted on the Forum, please do so.

Sep. 5: Labor Day Holiday

Sep. 12: Marx and socioeconomic transformation: read Karl Marx, assigned essays from *Selected Works*

Sep. 19: Marxism and political transformation: read Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution," from *Reform or Revolution and Other Writings*

Sep. 26: Weber and Lenin: read materials from Max Weber and from V.I. Lenin posted on Community Forum

Oct. 3: Psychoanalysis and transformations of consciousness: read materials from Freud and Terry Eagleton's chapter on psychoanalytic theory posted on Community Forum

Oct. 10: The Frankfurt School synthesis I: Read Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*

Oct. 17: The Frankfurt School synthesis II: Read Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

MIDTERM ESSAY TOPICS DISTRIBUTED IN CLASS

Oct. 24: Late critical theory: read Gordon Finlayson, *Habermas: A Very Short Introduction*

Oct. 31: View and discuss film. MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE IN CLASS

Nov. 7: The postmodern turn in social thought: read Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of Human Knowledge*.

PRESENTATION OF BOOK REVIEWS

Nov. 14: Radical feminism: read Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*.

PRESENTATION OF BOOK REVIEWS

Nov.21: 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.

PRESENTATION OF BOOK REVIEWS. SUBMIT PROPOSALS FOR FINAL PAPERS

Nov. 28: The revival of critical thought. Read Slavoj Zizek. *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*, and essays from Douzinas and Zizek, *The Idea of Communism* posted on Community Forum.

FINAL DATE FOR SUBMISSION OF BOOK REVIEW PAPERS

Dec. 5: Implications of critical theories for conflict resolution.

PANEL DISCUSSION AND INTERACTION WITH CLASS.

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