

**Introduction to Critical Theory**  
**SAIC ARTHI 3700-001 Summer 2005 6w2 MI 617 M, T, Th 6 - 9 PM**  
**Instructor: Christopher Cutrone**

Course title: Introduction to Critical Theory

Instructor: Chris Cutrone (e-mail: ccutrone@speedsite.com), office hours by appointment

Course description:




Through the close reading of key texts in the history of Critical Theory, focusing on writers in and around the Frankfurt School, this course traces the development of the theory of the critical social concerns of modern (and so-called "post"-modern) art to the present. Critical theorists of modern art and society we read include Marx, Trotsky, Lukács, Kracauer, Benjamin, Marcuse, Adorno, Greenberg, Barthes, and Foucault; and our consideration of the history of the critical theory of modern art is framed by recent writings by Susan Buck-Morss and Robert Pippin, the historic debate on the nature and character of (post)modernism by Habermas and Lyotard, and a case study of the founding of the art journal *October*.

Course requirements and grading policy:

This is an advanced, discussion-based undergraduate and graduate course organized as a seminar. In-class student participation is crucial to the ongoing development of our considerations of the issues in the course readings. No unexcused absences are allowed. Class participation consists of student attendance and discussion. Over the course of the term, students volunteer for several 5-10 minute class presentations on the readings, consisting of their critical reactions, beyond summary overview. All students are expected to attend every class session and bring one or two written reaction questions for each of the readings. Student reactions to the readings help guide the course conversation.

The grade evaluation of student performance in the course consists of 3 components:

1. Attendance and class discussion participation: **15%** (~1% per class session)
2. In-class presentations on readings (two or more per course term, depending on enrollment): **10%**
3. Writing assignments: 2 short or 1 long paper(s) (of 4-5 or 10 double-spaced pages): **75%**

Course readings: all readings are available at <http://docutek.artic.edu> (password: "theory"):    
Additionally, 2 audio CDs, Adorno CDs 1 & 2, are available for listening before Week 4: 

Course schedule: [week, class session number, day and date, division of presentations on readings]

Week 1: Introduction, modernism and modernity

Class session 1: Mon. 7/11/05

1. Susan Buck-Morss, response to "Visual Culture Questionnaire" [from *October* #77, 1996]
2. Robert Pippin, "What was abstract art? Hegel's point of view" (2002), and on Critical Theory (2003)

2: Tues. 7/12/05

1. Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author" (1968); and Michel Foucault, "What is an Author?" (1969)
2. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment?" (1784); and Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" (1978)
3. Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity -- An Incomplete Project" (1980)
4. Jean-François Lyotard, "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" (1982)

3: Thurs. 7/14/05

1. Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), and "Modernist Painting" (1961)
2. T. J. Clark, "Greenberg's Theory of Art" (1982); and Michael Fried, response to Clark (1982)

Week 2: Critical theory of modernity

4: Mon. 7/18/05

*FILM:* scene from Ronald F. Maxwell, *Gettysburg* (1993) "No Divine Spark"

1. Hebert Marcuse, "A Note on Dialectic" (1960); and Karl Marx, from the 1844 Manuscripts
2. Marx and Engels, from the Manifesto of the Communist Party (1848)

5: Tues. 7/19/05

1. Rosa Luxemburg, from "The Crisis in German Social Democracy" [a.k.a. the "Junius Pamphlet," 1915]
2. Leon Trotsky, Literature and Revolution (1924) Ch. 6-7-8, and "Art and Politics in Our Epoch" (1938)

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School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 112 S. Michigan Ave., room 617

6: Thurs. 7/21/05

1. Georg Lukács, "The Phenomenon of Reification" [from *History and Class Consciousness*, 1923]
2. Wilhelm Reich, "Ideology as Material Power" [from *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, 1933-46]

Week 3: Cultural criticism and society (1): mass society, media and culture

7: Mon. 7/25/05

1. Siegfried Kracauer, "The Mass Ornament," and "The Little Shopgirls Go to the Movies" (1928)
2. Kracauer, "Photography" (1927)

8: Tues. 7/26/05

AUDIO: Pale Saints, "Language of Flowers" (1990)

1. Walter Benjamin, "Little History of Photography" (1931); and 2. Benjamin, "Experience" (1913), "Experience and Poverty" (1933), "Mickey Mouse" (1931), and "On the Mimetic Faculty" (1933)

9: Thurs. 7/28/05 FIRST PAPER DUE IN CLASS

AUDIO: Aphex Twin, "Girl/Boy Song" (1996)

1. Theodor W. Adorno, "The Curves of the Needle" (1927)
2. Adorno, "The Form of the Phonograph Record" (1934)

Week 4: Cultural criticism and society (2): art and social progress ☉ PLEASE LISTEN TO: Adorno CDs 1 & 2

10: Mon. 8/1/05 AUDIO: 50 Cent, "In da Club" (2003); and Anton Webern, 5 Pieces for Orchestra (Op.10, 1913)

1. Adorno, "Commodity Music Analysed" (1934-40), and "On the Social Situation of Music" (1932)
2. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening" (1938)

11: Tues. 8/2/05

1. Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (1934)
2. Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch" (1939)

12: Thurs. 8/4/05 FILM: René Clair, Entr'acte (1924), and scene from À Nous la Liberté (1931) "The Singing Flower"

1. Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936)
2. Adorno, letter to Benjamin on the "Work of Art" essay (1936)

Week 5: History and future of modern art

13: Mon. 8/8/05

1. Baudelaire, from 1846 and 1855 art criticism, and prefaces and poems from The Flowers of Evil (1867)
2. Benjamin, "The Paris of the Second Empire in Baudelaire" (1938)

14: Tues. 8/9/05

1. Benjamin "Paris, [the] Capital of the 19th Century" [1935 Arcades Project exposé, revised in 1939]
2. Benjamin and Adorno, exchange on Benjamin's Arcades Project exposé (1935)

15: Thurs. 8/11/05

1. Benjamin, Arcades Project: Conv. D ["Boredom, Eternal Return"]; and Baudelaire, from Fusées (1867)
2. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History" [a.k.a. the "Theses," 1940], and Paralipomena (1940)

Week 6: Critical Theory's legacy and postmodernism: the case of the art journal October

16: Mon. 8/15/05 AUDIO: AC/DC, "Back in Black" (1980); VIDEO: Paula Greif, New Order "Round & Round" video (1989);

FILM: scene from Sergei Eisenstein, October (1927) "April 3rd [1917]: Lenin Leads the People [at the Finland Station]"

1. Daniel Bell, "Modernism and Capitalism" [Forward to *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*, 1978]
2. Rosalind Krauss, et al., "About October" [inaugural journal editorial statement, *October* #1, 1976]
3. Douglas Crimp, "The Photographic Activity of Postmodernism" [from *October* #15, 1980]

17: Tues. 8/16/05

AUDIO: Laurie Anderson, "Language is a Virus" (1986)

1. Crimp, "The End of Painting" [from *October* #16, 1981]

18: Thurs. 8/18/05 SECOND/FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS

AUDIO: Mazzy Star, "Fade into You" (1993);

VIDEO: Chris Cutrone, "Movie" [video 1998, song by His Name Is Alive (1996)]

1. Krauss, "The Originality of the Avant-Garde: A Postmodernist Repetition" [from *October* #18, 1981]
2. ENVOI: Hamza Walker [profile of contemporary art curator in August 2005 *Univ. Chicago Magazine*]