

Course Description

Course Unit

Critical Theory (Frankfurt School)

UC Code

922141

ECTS Credits

7,5 ECTS

Work Hours

210H (7,5 ECTS)

Level

MA

Academic year and Semester

2024/2025, S1

Faculty

José Manuel Gomes da Silva André (com Tamara Caraus e Mariana Teixeira)

Class

TP 1

Language of instruction

English

Class Description

The aim of this course is to introduce the main methods, concepts, and authors of the tradition of Critical Theory (also called the “Frankfurt School”). It will explore the specific understanding of “critique” in the works of its main representatives (Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Habermas), of its predecessors (Kant, Hegel, Marx, Lukács), and contemporary approaches that seek to extend this theoretical framework. Concepts to be examined include “reification”, “alienation”, “ideology”, and “emancipation”. The course will close with an analysis of critiques directed to Critical Theory and its dialogue with contemporary global issues (ecology, feminism, coloniality, technology, etc.). By the end of this course, students will:

- be familiarised with Critical Theory's 'canonical' texts and authors as well as its contemporary developments, allowing for advanced study in this field;
- be equipped with concepts and methodological tools for critically analyzing contemporary societies.

Grading and Assessment

The assessment will be based in three components:

1. A final essay addressing one of the topics discussed in the seminar (60% of the total grade). The essays are due on January 31st, 2025 and should be max. 4000 words long for MA Students and 6000 words for PhD students.
2. A seminar presentation of one of the texts from the reading list (25% of the total grade). Students should sign up on the first 2 weeks of the semester for a 15-20-minute presentation.
3. Participation in class discussion (15% of the total grade).

Bibliography

Marx, K. "The fetishism of commodities and its secret" in *Capital*, vol. 1. London: Penguin Books, 1990, 163–177.

Lukács, G. "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat" in *History and Class Consciousness*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1971, 83–150.

Horkheimer, M. "Traditional and Critical Theory", in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, New York: Continuum, 1972, 188–243.

Horkheimer, M., Adorno, T.W. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2002.

Benjamin, W. "On the Concept of History" in *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2003, 389–400.

Marcuse, H. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Industrial Society*, London: Routledge, 2002.

Habermas, J. *Knowledge and Human Interests*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

Fraser, N., Honneth, A. *Redistribution or Recognition? A Philosophical-Political Exchange*, New York: Verso, 2003.

Allen, A. *The End of Progress: Decolonizing the Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia UP, 2016.

Prerequisites (if applicable)

Basic knowledge about Kant, Hegel and Marx can be beneficial but is not mandatory.

