GER 411. Introduction to Critical Theory

This course introduces to key concepts and the practice of Critical Theory. Readings include texts by Walter Benjamin, Theodor W. Adorno, and Jacques Derrida.

12 Sep  Introduction

19 Sep  Kant, Preface to Critique of Pure Reason and “Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?”; Marx, “For a Ruthless Criticism”, „A Contribution to the Critique...“ (Marx-Engels-Reader, 12-15, 53-65)

26 Sep  Benjamin, The Task of the Translator, On Language as such and on the Language of Man; Derrida, Tours de Babel.

3 Oct  Benjamin, Critique of Violence; Derrida, Force of Law

10 Oct  Thanksgiving

17 Oct  Benjamin, Theses on History, selection from the Arcade Project


31 Oct  Adorno, Negative Dialectics, Introduction; Minima Moralia, concluding aphorism

7 Nov  Horkheimer and Adorno, Dialectic of Enlightenment, Preface and “Concept of Enlightenment”

14 Nov  cont., “Odysseus or the Myth and Enlightenment”

21 Nov  cont. “The Culture Industry”

28 Nov  Adorno, “Notes on philosophical thinking” and “Marginalia on Theory and Praxis”

5 Dec  Final Discussion