

Critical Theory Concentration

Director: Professor Latiolais

The central goal of critical theory is (1) to analyze the various forces that shape contemporary societies, (2) to diagnose their crises, antagonisms, ruptures, and (3) to identify and mobilize agents of social change. Critical theory is a term that describes a wide array of approaches to understanding and criticizing the myriad relations of domination characterizing contemporary society. Although there are many disagreements among critical theorists, most agree about the terrain under consideration: how do human beings create the social world, and how are they created by it, in ways that disempower social agents and disfigure their desires? Or, what is the relationship between structure and agency, and what does this tell us about relations of power and domination? Human freedom and social justice are generally the ethical ideals animating these investigations, so that critical theory is necessarily both descriptive and normative in nature while it presumes a close connection between theory and practice. Most simply, critical theorists ask, what is wrong with our world, and how can we make it better? At a deeper methodological level, critical theorists also see themselves as practitioners in a distinctive orientation to knowledge. Interdisciplinary in nature and drawing primarily from numerous fields in the humanities and social sciences, critical theory offers a genealogy of social reality on one hand and a genealogy of its own critical stance within it on the other. Many critical theorists presume that language both creates and interprets reality, that agents are historically constituted, or that knowledge is bound up with power relations so that there is no objective "outside" from which to view the "truth." Thus, critical theory poses a challenge to many of the traditional disciplines that assume that facts can be ascertained and deployed free of a normative framework.

Requirements for the Concentration

Number of Units

6 units

Required Course

PHIL 208 19th-Century Philosophy: The Critique of Modernity

Five additional courses taken from at least three different departments:

ANSO 205 Urban Sociology
ANSO 225 Sex and Sexualities
ANSO 236 Race and Racism
ANSO 275 Thinking Theoretically
ANSO 330 Class, Status, and Power
ANSO 345 Theories of Society and Culture
ARTX 224 20th-Century Art
ARTX 227 Modern Art Museum
ARTX 290 Art and Gender
ARTX 340 Ways of Seeing
ENGL 108 Global Media & Visual Culture
ENGL 218 Post-Colonial Literature
ENGL 390 English Junior Seminar
ENGL 435 Advanced Literary Studies: American Indian Literature and the Law
ENGL 436 Literary Theory
PHIL 212 Philosophy of the Social Sciences
PHIL 211 Philosophy of Law
PHIL/SEMN 215 Human Rights & International Law
PHIL 291 Theorizing Citizenship & Immigration
PHIL 306 Philosophy of Language
PHIL 310 Critical Social Theory

PHIL 311 Postmodern Critical Theory
POLS 260 Liberty, Equality, and Authority
POLS 265 Feminist Political Theories
POLS 360 Contemporary Political Theory
POLS 320 Democracy and Democratic Theory
PSYC 430 Interviewing and Narrative Analysis
RELG 201/ARTX 205/SEMN 205 Religious Art and Material Culture
RELG 202 Same-Sex, Gender, and Religion
RELG 212 Contemporary Biblical Studies
WGS 390 Feminist and Queer Inquiry

Critical Theory Courses

CRIT 593 Senior Individualized Project

Each program or department sets its own requirements for Senior Individualized Projects done in that department, including the range of acceptable projects, the required background of students doing projects, the format of the SIP, and the expected scope and depth of projects. See the Kalamazoo Curriculum -> Curriculum Details and Policies section of the Academic Catalog for more details.

Prerequisite: Permission of department and SIP supervisor required.

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