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 225 Sex and Sexualities
- ANSO 236 Race and Racism
- ANSO/ENVS-365 Humand and Non-Humans
- ARTX 224 The 1960s
- ARTX 227 Modern Art Museum
- ARTX 290 Art and Gender: Primitiv-Surreal
- ARTX 370 Global Souths and Others
- ARTX 491 Ways of Seeing
- ENGL 318 Post-Colonial Literature
- ENGL 436 Advanced Topics in Literary Theory
- ENGL/SEMN 492 Advanced Literary Studies: American Indian Literature and the Law
- PHIL 211 Philosophy of Law
- PHIL 212 Philosophy of the Social Sciences
- PHIL/SEMN 215 Human Rights & International Law
- PHIL 306 Philosophy of Language
- PHIL 310 Critical Social Theory
- PHIL 311 Postmodern Critical Theory
- POLS 260 Liberty, Equality, and Authority
- POLS/WGS 265 Feminist Political Theories
- POLS 320 Democracy and Democratic Theory
- PSYC 330 Interviewing and Narrative Analysis
CRIT 593 Senior Integrated Project
Each program or department sets its own requirements for Senior Integrated 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 Senior Integrated Project section of the Academic Catalog for more details.
Prerequisite: Permission of department and SIP supervisor required.

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