Professor Stephen Eric Bronner

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Department of Political Science

790:395:02 — Critical Theory and Society, Fall 2015

Tuesdays 12:35 – 3:35, Loree 115

Office Hours: 4-5pm Tuesdays, Hickman Hall 306

TA: Edwin Daniel Jacob, [danjacob@rutgers.edu](mailto:danjacob@rutgers.edu)

Syllabus

This course will center on the most important works of the “Frankfurt School” and the influences upon it. Critical theory will speak issues of aesthetics, politics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology: it emphasized the need for an interdisciplinary perspective from the beginning. The reading is heavy and difficult: be prepared to make a serious commitment to this course. Requirements will include two take-home examinations of 12 to 15 pages each and an in-class presentation. Class participation will figure into the grade. Attendance is mandatory.

**Required Readings**

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Stephen Eric Bronner, *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*

Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner (eds.), *Critical Theory and Society*

Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*  
Max Horkheimer, *Critical Theory*  
Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*  
Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*

Herbert Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*

**Suggested Reading**

Carl Boggs, *Gramsci’s Marxism*

Stephen Eric Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment*

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

Michael J. Thompson (ed.), *Georg Lukács Reconsidered*

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1 (9/1)**

Introduction

**Week 2 (9/15)**

Bronner and Kellner (eds.), “[Introduction](http://pages.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/essays/criticaltheorysociety.pdf)” to *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 1-21

Horkheimer, “[The State of Contemporary Philosophy](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/horkheimer/1931/present-situation.htm),” in ibid, pp. 25-36

Bronner, “[Introduction](http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/bron1.htm)” to *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, pp. 3-11

\_\_\_, “[Sketching the Lineage](http://ehis.ebscohost.com.proxy.libraries.rutgers.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=c330f2c9-9e4c-40c4-b95a-f9af493a7174%40sessionmgr13&hid=3),” from ibid, pp. 11-38

**Weeks 3-4 (9/22 and 9/29)**

Lukács, “[What is Orthodox Marxism?](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/orthodox.htm),” in *History and Class Consciousness*, pp. 1-26

\_\_\_, “[Class Consciousness](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/works/history/lukacs3.htm),” in ibid, pp. 46-82

\_\_\_, “[Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat](http://www.marxists.org/archive/lukacs/index.htm),” in ibid, pp. 83-222

Suggested:

Bronner, “Lukács and the Dialectic,” in Thomson (ed.), *Georg Lukács Reconsidered*

**Week 5 (10/6)**

Gramsci, “The Modern Prince,” in *The Prison Notebooks*, pp. 123-205

\_\_\_, “Some Problems in the Study of the Philosophy of Praxis,” in ibid, pp. 381-419

Suggested:

Boggs, *Gramsci’s Marxism*

**Week 6 (10/13)**

Horkheimer, “[Traditional and Critical Theory](http://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0CDgQFjAB&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.sfu.ca%2F~andrewf%2Fhork.doc&ei=yhvqUaj_M_Db4AONvYCYBA&usg=AFQjCNEYIvLNw_uy8WmpYhTddHqiv3Vd5w&bvm=bv.49478099,d.dmg),” in *Critical Theory*, pp. 188-243

\_\_\_, “Materialism and Metaphysics,” in ibid, pp. 10-46

Suggested:

Bronner, “Horkheimer’s Road,” from *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, pp. 77-95

**Week 7 (10/20)**

Benjamin, “[The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction](http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/ge/benjamin.htm),” in *Illuminations*, pp. 217-251

\_\_\_, “[Theses on the Philosophy of History](http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm),” in ibid, pp. 253-264

Suggested:

Bronner, “Rescuing the Fragments,” from *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, pp. 96-115

**Weeks 8-9 (10/27 and 11/3)**

Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.1-34 and 94-136

Adorno, “Perennial Fashion—Jazz,” in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 199-209

Suggested:

Bronner, “Dialectics at a Standstill,” from *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, pp. 137-155

Bronner, *Reclaiming the Enlightenment*

**Week 10 (11/10)**

Marcuse, *An Essay on Liberation*

Marcuse, “Liberation from the Affluent Society,” in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 276-287

Suggested:

Douglas Kellner, “Introduction” to Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*

Bronner, “[One-Dimensional Man at 50](http://logosjournal.com/2015/bronner-marcuse/),” *Logos* 14, No. 1 (Winter 2015)

**Week 11 (11/17)**

Habermas, “The Public Sphere,” in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 136-142

Pollock, “State Capitalism,” in ibid, pp. 95-118

Bronner, “Critical Theory and Civil Society,” from *Of Critical Theory and its Theorists*, pp. 214-230

**Week 12-13 (11/24 and 12/1)**

Habermas, “The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society,” in *Critical Theory and Society*, pp. 292-312

Adorno, “Resignation,” *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978)

Suggested:

Bronner, *Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction*

**Week 14 (12/8)**

Bronner, “Points of Departure,” from *Of Critical Theory and Its Theorists*, pp. 231-258