First formulated by members of the so-called Frankfurt School, Critical Theory has emerged as one of the most influential strands of 20th century thought. This course will draw attention to the cultural contradictions of modern society through an exploration of the roots, evolution, and influence of some of the key theories put forth by the first generation of the Frankfurt School, specifically the theories of Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. There will be five parts to this course. The first part will help situate the intellectual background of the early Frankfurt School through a look at the genesis of its initial interdisciplinary research program and the influences that helped shape this program. The second part will focus on the development of Marcuse’s book *One-Dimensional Man* through close readings of both the published text and an early draft housed in the Brandeis Archives and Special Collections department. Students will also have the opportunity to analyze an exchange of ideas at the Marcuse conference being held at Brandeis. The third part of the course will explore dialogues on the topics of the New Left student movement, psychoanalysis, and modernism. The fourth part will examine the contemporary relevance of Horkheimer and Adorno’s book *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and the extension of its arguments on the topics of enlightenment, the culture industry, and anti-semitism. The fifth and final part of the course will delve into the early Frankfurt School’s influence on recent theory, especially aesthetic theory and postmodern theory. An overall emphasis will be placed on the dialogues and debates these theorists had with each other, as well as other thinkers and currents of thought. The goal of this course is to provide a basis for understanding the early Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.

**Required Texts** (All other readings are available on the course LATTE page)


**Grade Breakdown**

Class Participation: 15%
Marcuse Conference Analysis (2-3 pages): 5%
Archive Commentary on Marcuse Papers (3-5 pages): 10%
Short Papers (each 3-5 pages): 10% x 2
Dialogue Analysis (5-7 pages): 15%
Final Paper (10-15 pages): 35%
Part 1 – Foundational Essays

1) Introduction and Formative Texts

August 28
   No Readings

September 2
   ~Karl Marx – The Fetishism of the Commodity and Its Secret
   ~Georg Lukács – The Phenomenon of Reification

2) Inaugural Addresses, Interpretation, and Interdisciplinarity

September 4
   ~Horkheimer – The Present Situation of Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research
   ~Adorno – The Actuality of Philosophy

September 9
   ~Benjamin – The Task of the Translator
   ~Marcuse – A Note on Dialectic

3) Defining Critical Theory

September 11
   ~Adorno – Cultural Criticism and Society
   ~Benjamin – On the Concept of History

September 16
   ~Horkheimer – Traditional and Critical Theory
   ~Marcuse – Philosophy and Critical Theory

Part 2 – One-Dimensional Man

4) One-Dimensional Man: One-Dimensional Society

September 18
   ~Introduction
   ~The New Forms of Social Control
   ~The Closing of the Political Universe

September 23 (Visit Archives and Special Collections; first short paper due)
   ~The Conquest of the Unhappy Consciousness: Repressive Desublimation
   ~The Closing of the Universe of Discourse
5) One-Dimensional Man: One-Dimensional Thought

September 30
~Negative Thinking: The Defeated Logic of Protest
~From Negative to Positive Thinking: Technological Rationality and the Logic of Domination

October 2 (Rapaporte Treasure Hall, Goldfarb Library: The Many Dimensions of Herbert Marcuse conference)
~The Triumph of Positive Thinking: One-Dimensional Philosophy

6) One-Dimensional Man: The Chance of Alternatives

October 7 (Marcuse conference analysis due)
~The Historical Commitment of Philosophy
~The Catastrophe of Liberation
~Conclusion

Part 3 – Dialogues

7) The New Left

October 13
~Marcuse – Repressive Tolerance

October 14
~Marcuse and Adorno – Correspondence on the German Student Movement
~Who’s Afraid of the Ivory Tower? A Conversation with Theodor W. Adorno

October 21
~Marcuse – The Problem of Violence and the Radical Opposition
~Benjamin – Critique of Violence

8) Dissent and the Arcades Project

October 23 (archive commentary due)
~Marcuse – The Social Implications of Freudian “Revisionism”
~Erich Fromm – The Human Implications of Instinctivistic “Radicalism”
~Marcuse – A Reply to Erich Fromm
~Fromm – A Counter-Rebuttal

October 28
~Benjamin – Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century
~Exchange with Theodor W. Adorno on the Essay “Paris, Capital of the Nineteenth Century”
October 30 (Mandel Reading Room, 303 ~ Guest speaker Howard Eiland on “Reality as Palimpsest”)
  ~Benjamin – On the Image of Proust
  ~Benjamin – Surrealism
  ~Benjamin – Excavation and Memory

Part 4) Dialectic of Enlightenment

9) Dialectic of Enlightenment: Enlightenment

November 4
  ~Kant – Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?
    ~The Concept of Enlightenment

November 6
  ~Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment
  ~Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality

10) Dialectic of Enlightenment: Culture Industry

November 11 (dialogue analysis due)
  ~The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception
  ~Adorno – Culture Industry Reconsidered

November 13
  ~Adorno – On Popular Music
  ~Adorno – Jazz – The Perennial Fashion

11) Dialectic of Enlightenment: Anti-Semitism

November 18
  ~Elements of Anti-Semitism: Limits of Enlightenment
  ~Horkheimer – The Jews and Europe

November 20
  ~Notes and Sketches
  ~Adorno – The Meaning of Working Through the Past

Part 5) Aesthetic and Postmodern Theory

12) Aesthetic Theory

November 25 (second short paper due)
  ~Benjamin – The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction
  ~Adorno – On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening
December 2
~Marcuse – The Affirmative Character of Culture
~Adorno – The Autonomy of Art

13) Postmodernism and Conclusion

December 4
~Jürgen Habermas – Modernity: An Unfinished Project
~Jean-François Lyotard – What is Postmodernism?

December 15
Final Essay due by 11:59pm via email

Course Reserves

John Abromeit – Max Horkheimer and the Foundations of the Frankfurt School
(B3279.H8474 A825 2011)

Howard Eiland and Michael Jennings – Walter Benjamin: A Critical Life
(PT2603.E455 Z6455 2014)

David Held – Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas
(HM24 .H457)

Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno – Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments
(B3279.H8473 P5713 2002)

(H62 .J37)

Douglas Kellner – Herbert Marcuse and the Crisis of Marxism
(B945.M2984 K44 1984)

Herbert Marcuse – One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society
(HM101 .M268)

Thomas Wheatland – The Frankfurt School in Exile
(HM467 .W54 2009)

Rolf Wiggershaus – The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance
(HM24 .W4861 1994)
Course Policies

Academic Integrity: University Policy: “You are expected to be familiar with, and to follow, the University’s policies on academic integrity. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities for all policies and procedures. All policies related to academic integrity apply to in-class and take home projects, assignments, exams, and quizzes. Students may only collaborate on assignments with permission from the instructor. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university.”

Attendance and Participation: Students are expected to attend every class, read the assigned readings, and contribute to the discussion. More than two unexcused absences will result in a 5% deduction of the final grade.

Assignment Format: Students should submit typed assignments using a 12-point font and double spacing. The citation style must be consistent, and a bibliography must be submitted if a work is cited.

Deadlines: With the exception of the final essay, students are expected to submit assignments at the beginning of the class they are due. Submitting an assignment after the deadline will result in a 5% per day deduction in the assignment grade, unless a documented excuse can be provided more than 24 hours before the assignment deadline.

Disabilities: University Policy: “If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately.”

Syllabus Alterations: Students will be notified if the syllabus needs to be altered in any way - for example, because of a snow day during scheduled class time.

Technology: Laptops or other technological devices can only be used during class time to access the course material. Students will be expected to take notes with paper and a pen or pencil. All cell phones must be turned off during class time.