

ADORNO STRIKES BACK: WRITING AN ACTUALLY CRITICAL ESSAY

Finishing an Article in Philosophy and Critical Theory

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SPRING Semester

HOURS

30

FREQUENCY

4 x 45 every two weeks

Time: Wednesdays, 17:00-20:00, every two weeks

Duration: 4 x 45 minutes every two weeks, one semester for a total of 30 hours.

Starting date: February 2024

Location: Palace Staszic, room TBD

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course engages with critical theory as a method of analysis and a form of academic text. Critical theory is traditionally defined as a theoretical inquiry focused on society, culture, politics or even philosophy that attempts to challenge power relations and reveal hidden structures that cause suffering to the lives of individuals. With the recent return of critical theory in the global academy, the critical essay as a form of theoretical expression is also making a comeback, along with its specific form of argumentation, style and method of developing the subject matter.

We will focus on Theodor Adorno - a 20th-century philosopher who can be considered a (if not the) master of critical theory and the critical essay. We will pay close attention to Adorno's last period of work, which fell in the 1960s, when he produced many of his most important publications. We will analyze his texts that develop the method of critical analysis of theoretical and philosophical discourse, from the writings of the classics of philosophy to Adorno's contemporary theorists. We will look at the more known publications, such as *Jargon of Authenticity* and *Negative Dialectics*, as well as some of the scattered essays that make up Adorno's oeuvre of the period.

The aim of the course is to focus on what a critical essay in contemporary philosophy and critical theory can look like and how it should be written in order to be published. A team of

experienced scholars will work closely with a group of PhD candidates on their writing samples and discuss different aspects of the process of publishing on critical theory in contemporary globalized academia.

This is an English-language course, organized as a 2-semester seminar in the academic year 2023/2024. The course is open to any interested PhD student at GSSR.

Main course topics: critical theory, social analysis, philosophical critique, Frankfurt School, contemporary theory, negative dialectics, German philosophy, Jewish philosophy

COURSE AIMS

The task that the seminar sets for the participants is to reconstruct the main methods of critical analysis and the methods of its practice. Therefore, the reading of Adorno's texts will be linked to the participants' own work on their way of writing a critical essay.

Eligibility

This course is open to GSSR doctoral students with decent command over continental tradition of philosophy on MA level.

Course requirements

Successful completion of the course requires active class participation and a preparation of a draft article that potentially could be submitted for publication considerations to an academic publishing outlet, ideally, a peer-reviewed journal. The writing assignments are due ahead of the class period they are assigned for. Specific deadlines will be announced at the beginning of the course.

The revised draft of your paper is due electronically to the instructors by the deadlines specified in class and no later than June 30.

Grading

Your grade will be based: 25% on Class participation; and 75% on the Paper you submit by the end of the course.

The grading of the paper takes into account the overall structure of the paper, the consistency of the argument, the clarity of style and the overall relevance of the content in each section of the text. The structure of the text and the consistency of the argumentation is expected to be in place before the class on May 8. The greatest weight will be given to assessing the suitability of the finished paper for the three "target" publishing outlets it has been designed for. Other aspects of the text will be weighted based on the type of the text you submit. The grading of the paper will be the joint responsibility of the lecturers.

Learning outcomes

The outcomes are twofold. On the one hand, students will learn in detail the mature philosophy of T.W. Adorno with special stress put on his vision of dialectics and the very idea and practice of critical thinking. On the other hand, students will practice their skills in writing a philosophical essay in the critical tradition of Adorno and preparing it for publication.

Knowledge

- The vision of criticism and dialectics according to T.W. Adorno
- Understanding the importance of different elements in composing a critical philosophical essay
- Understanding the necessary elements of an academic paper prepared for publication

Skills

- Capacity to determine and name the proper field / discipline in which the participant will operate when writing, and, consequently, to select suitable journals for their publications.
- Capacity to use proper terminology in a clear and concise manner that will allow the student to elaborate their rationale.
- Capacity to correspond with editors, respond to editors and reviewers, revise, and re-submit a piece of writing that incorporates criticisms and identified gaps and weaknesses in one's presentation of an argument or review.

Communication

skills

- Ability to present a prepared philosophical argument to a group of readers.
- Skills in constructively participating in a theoretical exchange of ideas (academic debate), in written form.
- Ability to communicate with editors and reviewers of academic articles.

CLASSES & READINGS:

Hegel: Three Studies, trans. S. Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993)

Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords, trans. H. W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)

The Jargon of Authenticity, trans. K. Tarnowski and F. Will (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973)

Metaphysics: Concept and Problems, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000)

Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973)

Problems of Moral Philosophy, trans. Rodney Livingstone (California: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977)

Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, Or, The Perspective of the Dialectic* (New York: Verso, 2007).

Stuart Jeffries, *Grand Hotel Abyss: The Lives of the Frankfurt School* (New York: Verso, 2016)

Peter E. Gordon, *Adorno and Existence* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2016)

Sebastian Truskolaski, *Adorno and the Ban on Images* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020)

Peter E. Gordon, *A Precarious Happiness: Adorno and the Sources of Normativity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2023)