As the title of this course implies, we will discuss what is covered by the “the umbrella phrase “critical theory,” mainly from both the perspectives and/or schools of the ‘social sciences’ (Frankfurt School, for instance) and the “Humanities” (Continental and/or analytical Philosophy, for example). We will read authors who are considered central theory figures in the critical theory branches above mentioned. This also implies that we will be dealing with overlapping central concepts to these fields; i.e. “marxism(s)”, economic systems, colonialism and post-colonialism, structuralism, post/structuralism, deconstruction, and system theory among the various backgrounds of “Critical Theory.” Hence, we will also necessarily deal with historical and interdisciplinary views.

We will read primary excerpts from the following Marx texts:
- *Capital*

**Other readings**

Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory. An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*


Popper Karl. *Open Society and its Enemies*, (Vol. 2) [selected central chapters]

Kellner, Douglas. *Critical Theory: Marxism and Modernity*

Aijaz Ahmad. *In theory*

Since Backgrounds in Critical Theory has much overlap—interdisciplinary crossings—, students will have the opportunity to pursue their own critical interest in critical theory, whether in Humanities or in Social Sciences. This means, that students can apply central concepts either to their reading of literature or literary theory and/or pursue critical perspectives in the social sciences (i.e. Frankfurt school social critics) using theories such as structuralism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, pedagogy (i.e. Freire’s pedagogy and Gutierrez’s theology of liberation) and the other “theories” that we will discuss in class.

**Course Requirements:**

Since this is a seminar ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION are givens for the class. We may agree at the first meeting to write “protocols” or to give presentations of assigned readings according to the momentum or the speed the class takes on. I know that
there are some readings that will take longer than others, and will require lengthier introduction and discussion.

Final Written Paper on a topic that may be of personal interest related to your research goals, and as related to topics covered in class. [Feel free to discuss your final paper topic with me, and/or provide a presentation to the class]

Due: Final Exam Week

**General Span of Assigned Readings:**

- Week 2 and 3: Complete: Barry, *Beginning Theory*
- Week 4, 5, and 6: K. Popper, *Open Society and Its Enemies*
- Week 7, 8, and 9: Kellner, D. *Critical Theory, Marxism and Modernity*
- Week 10 and 11: Bronner and Kellner, *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* [Different chapters to be distributed among class participants and presented orally]
- Week 12, 13 & 14: A. Ahmad, *In Theory*

[Depending on interest and how discussion flows, we will intercalate readings mentioned above at the beginning on Marx. I will make them available in electronic form]

**Office Hrs. Contact:**

If you are willing to discuss any other topics with me, feel free to do so
Office: Walker 322 [Phone: 7-3257] email: casandov@mtu.edu
Regular hrs: MWF at 10 a.m. [other hrs. by appt]

**Grade:**
Even split between Attendance/Participation and Final Paper