Michigan Technological University
Rhetoric and Technical Communication Program
HU 5110: Backgrounds of Critical Theory
Fall Semester 2011
Wednesday, 7:05-9:35 p.m.
Walker Arts and Humanities Center, Room 329B

Professor: Dr. Dieter Wolfgang Adolphs
Office: Walker Arts and Humanities Center, Room 308
Telephone: 487-3231 (work); 482-3182 (home)
E-Mail: dadolph@mtu.edu; crittheory-I@mtu.edu
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday, 11:00-11:30 a.m.
(Other times by appointment)

This course studies the major critical theories, especially the Frankfurt School, that have influenced contemporary theories such as feminist theory, postmodern theory, cultural studies, critical pedagogy, and discourse theory. It focuses on primary texts and introduces students to the challenges of reading theoretical texts and texts in translation.

Required Book:
Book Description: Distinguished international contributors examine the major figures in Critical Theory, including Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Habermas, and Honneth, as well as lesser known but important thinkers. They survey the shared philosophical concerns that have given impetus to Critical Theory throughout its history, and reveal the diversity among its proponents that contributes so much to its richness as a philosophical school.

Required Readings from the Following Books:
Giovanna Borradori, Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2004
Jürgen Habermas, An Awareness of What is Missing: Faith and Reason in a Post-secular Age, Polity, 2010

Required Readings (Web Links):
Max Horkheimer:
  http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/horkheimer/1931/present-situation.htm
- “The Social Function of Philosophy” (1939):
- “Theism and Atheism” (1963):
  http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/horkheimer/1963/1theism-atheism.htm
- (Horkheimer an Adorno): “Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception” (1944):
  http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm

More links to Marcuse, Adorno, Habermas, and others (for optional readings):
http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/index.htm

Prerequisite: graduate standing or permission of the instructor.

Course Objectives:
Reading and discussing these works listed above will help you to:

- deliberate on the way communicative actions function and perhaps also malfunctions at a time of increasing globalization/fragmentation;
- understand how particular social and global conflicts affect the dynamics of communicative actions;
- deliberate on the conceptual challenges of postmodernism and colonizing forces to the philosophical discourse of modernity;
- understand the role of historical, political, philosophical, and religious factors in creating cultural stereotypes, perceptions, fears, desires, and misunderstandings.

Every member of this course is strongly encouraged to voice her or his personal opinion and to actively participate in discussions.

Course Requirements:
- Regular attendance
- Active participation
- Required readings (see schedule)
- Two oral reports
• Four written reading responses
• Abstract for final paper
• Research Paper

Please familiarize yourself with the following MTU policies, guidelines, and services:
Academic Integrity: http://www.studentaffairs.mtu.edu/dean/judicial/policies/academic_integrity.html
Affirmative Action: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/aaol
Disability Services: http://www.admin.mtu.edu/urel/studenthandbook/student_services.html#disability

Also: this course description and all schedules are tentative and may be changed. If any such changes are made, you will receive a printed update during our regular class meetings.

**Tentative Schedule**

**Meeting 1** *(Wednesday, 31 August)*
Course Introduction
Beginning of film, *Baader Meinhof Complex*

**Meeting 2** *(Wednesday, 7 September, at my house)*
Discussion: *Cambridge*, chapter 1
Discussion: Horkheimer (see first two web links under Horkheimer)
Discussion: editors' introduction to Benjamin
Discussion: Video (excerpts; in German) on Adorno

**Meeting 3** *(Wednesday, 14 September)*
Discussion: *Cambridge*, chapter 2
Discussion: Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproductibility”
Discussion: Adorno, “The Schema of Mass Culture”

**Meeting 4** *(Wednesday, 21 September)*
Discussion: *Cambridge*, chapter 3; Introduction to the Adorno Reader
Discussion: Horkheimer and Adorno, “Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception”
Discussion: Adorno: “Culture Industry Reconsidered”

**Meeting 5** *(Wednesday, 28 September)*
Discussion: *Cambridge*, chapter 4; Introduction to “The Essential Marcuse”
Discussion: Adorno, “Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda
Discussion: Marcuse, “Freedom and Freud's Theory of Instincts”

**Meeting 6** *(Wednesday, 5 October)*
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 5
Discussion: Adorno, "Resignation"
Discussion: Marcuse: "Nature and Revolution" and "Repressive Tolerance"

Meeting 7 (Wednesday, 12 October)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 6
Discussion: Adorno, "On the Fetish Character of Music . . ."
Discussion: Honneth, "... A Sketch of Adorno's Social Theory" and Habermas on Adorno (pp. 181-2080

Meeting 8 (Wednesday, 19 October)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 7
Discussion: Finlayson (on Habermas), pp. xi-xxii, 1-1
Discussion: Habermas,

Meeting 9 (Wednesday, 26 October)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 8
Discussion: Finlayson, pp. 16-46
Discussion: Habermas,

Meeting 10 (Wednesday, 2 November)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 9
Discussion: Finlayson, pp. 47-75
Discussion: Habermas,

Meeting 11 (Wednesday, 8 November)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 10
Discussion: Finlayson, pp. 76-105
Discussion: Habermas/Bruck-Morrs

Meeting 12 (Wednesday, 16 November)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 11
Discussion: Finlayson, pp. 106-138
Discussion: Bruck-Morrs

Meeting 13 (Wednesday, 30 November)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 12
Discussion: Bruck-Morrs

Meeting 14 (Wednesday, 7 December)
Discussion: Cambridge, chapter 13 (Honneth)
Discussion: Honneth, "On the Idea of ‘Critique’ in the Frankfurt School"
Final Discussion
Topics for Oral Reports:

Horkheimer and his Critique of Instrumental Reason
Adorno on Art and Culture (incl. Minima Moralia)
Marcuse on Culture Industry (incl. Eros and Civilization)
Habermas on Public Sphere (incl. The Transformation of the P. S.)