



**University of Central Florida**

**PHI 4804  
Critical Theory**

**Instructor:** Bruce Janz

**Time:** Monday 6-8:50

**Phone:** 407-823-2273

**Section:** 0001 **Code:** 91513

**Course Page & Resource Page:**  
<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/>

**Office Hours:** See website

**Term:** Fall 2009

**Room:** HPA 107 (Room will likely change)

**Credits:** 3

**Final Exam:** Take Home, Dec. 12, 7 p.m.

**Office:** Psychology 223

**Prof. Email:** [janzb@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:janzb@mail.ucf.edu)

Critical theory, broadly understood, refers to contemporary interdisciplinary cultural interpretation and critique. We will first address the question of how to understand or "read" culture. Secondly, we will consider a variety of related approaches which re-assess cultural notions of meaning, identity, power, representation, place, resistance, production and consumption. And finally, we will consider the contribution of critical theory in its more specific sense, the Frankfurt School and its legacy. The goal will be to give students a set of tools to critically understand and participate in contemporary culture.

**Required Texts:**

- Storey, John. *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Pearson Longman, 2009. See also companion website <http://www.pearsoned.co.uk/storey>
- Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners*, online version.  
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>
- Web-based readings and resources, as assigned in class.
- Course Wiki <http://phi4804fall09.pbworks.com/>

**Requirements:**

1. Concept Application (15% of final grade)
2. Final Project (5% Prospectus, 20% Project)
3. Cultural Analysis (15% of final grade)
4. Midterm (20% of final grade)
5. Final Exam (25% of final grade)

**1. Concept Application\*** (15% of final grade; due Tuesday Oct. 5. Maximum Length: 1500 words): There will be a website in class that lists several key concepts in critical theory. Choose one of those concepts, and apply it to a contemporary reading of some cultural phenomenon or experience. In other words, I would like you to analyze some contemporary cultural experience or phenomenon (movie, TV show, art exhibition, cultural phenomenon, event or practice, or political, social, or religious institution, etc.) in terms of a specific concept described in the book. You will need to do some reading on the concept beyond what is given in the book. You will need to **upload this assignment to the course wiki**.

**2. Final Project\*** (25% of final grade; Prospectus\* due Nov. 2 (5%); Paper\* due Dec. 7 (20%). Length:

2500 words): I will need to see a prospectus for this project. A prospectus describes the project you plan on doing, and the resources you will use to accomplish the task. You will need to upload the prospectus to the course wiki by the deadline. The final project itself is most likely a thesis defense paper, in which you assess and critique a concept or a text that has been significant in the course. I say “most likely” because I am open to other creative variations on a project. All projects, though, have to show a good grasp of the course material and the ability to critically reflect on both the material and on contemporary culture. **The prospectus will need to be uploaded to the wiki; the paper should be handed in or emailed in**, in the format outlined in the Fine Print (see the end of the syllabus).

**3. Cultural Analysis\*** (15%): Each section of the course has readings. For at least 5 Of the weeks in the course (your choice, but at least two need to be before the midterm exam), choose an example from culture to analyze that illustrates or sheds light on what we are reading or talking about that week. Each of the 5 will get 3%. You can do more than 5, in which case I will take the highest 5 grades. The best analyses will use the concepts or readings in the course to clarify some example from culture. You may also “argue against” some concept or approach we are taking in class, but you still need to use an example to do so. There is an upper word limit on these analyses of 250 words. **You will need to upload these examples to the wiki.**

**4. Midterm** (20% of final grade; on Monday, Oct. 12): It will cover everything we’ve done since the beginning of the course, including classes, web-based material, and readings. You will not be able to do well on the midterm if you have missed a significant number of classes and/or have not done your readings. I will also likely have questions on it that ask you to critically analyze some feature of culture using the tools we’ve developed.

**5. Take Home Final Exam** (25% of final grade, due on or before the final exam date, Monday Dec. 14, 7:00 p.m., in my office or the classroom): Same basic format as the midterm, covering the whole course. **DO NOT EMAIL THIS EXAM OR POST IT TO THE WIKI - HARD COPY ONLY..**

**Gordon Rule:** This is a Gordon Rule course. That means that there are at least four graded written assignments. The four assignments that fulfill this requirement are indicated by an asterisk above. If you miss one of the assignments, the most you will get in the course is a C-, since a higher grade indicates fulfillment of the Gordon Rule Requirement. Please plan accordingly.

**Grade Distribution:** I will record the assignment grades based on the percentage of the course grade during the term (for example, a paper will be recorded as a grade out of 20 if it is 20% of the final course grade, even though it may be marked out of another number). The letter grade will be calculated only at the end of the course, based on full course grade. The distribution will be as follows:

A: 93-100	B: 83-86	C: 73-76	D: 63-66
A-: 90-92	B-: 80-82	C-: 70-72	D-: 60-62
B+: 87-89	C+: 77-79	D+: 67-69	F: 0-59

## Schedule: Critical Theory

Readings: Storey: John Storey, *Cultural Theory & Popular Culture*; Chandler: Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*; WEB= Course Website

### 1. Introduction (August 24, 31)

**Reading:** Storey, ch. 1-3

**2. Reading Culture (September 14, 21, 28, Oct. 5)**

*Reading:* Chandler; Storey, ch. 6

Concept Application Assignment Due Oct. 5.

**3. Review and Midterm (October 12)**

Midterm on Oct. 12

**4. Frankfurt School: Culture and Politics (October 19, 26)**

*Reading:* Storey ch. 4-5.

**5. Sites of Cultural Critique: Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Orientation (Nov. 2)**

*Reading:* Storey ch. 7-8

Prospectus for Final Assignment Due Nov. 2

**6. Cultural Production & the Place of Technology (Nov. 9)**

*Reading:* WEB: TBA

**7. Critical Theory and Place/Space (Nov. 16)**

*Reading:* WEB: TBA

**8. Contemporary Critical Theory: Traditionalism, Modernism and Postmodernism (Nov. 23)**

*Reading:* Storey, ch. 9

**8. Cultural Resistance (Nov. 30)**

*Reading:* Storey, ch. 10

**9. Wrap up (Dec. 7)**

Final Paper Due Dec. 7

**The Fine (but Important) Print**

For the full, updated "Fine Print", go to the website: <http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/fineprint.htm>