



University of Central Florida

PHI 4804 Critical Theory

Instructor: Bruce Janz	Term: Fall 2006
Time: Tues/Thurs 4:30-5:45	Room: VAB 0111
Phone: 407-823-2273	Credits: 3
Section: 0001 Code: 83259	Final Exam: Take Home
Course Page & Resource Page: http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~janzb/courses/	Office: Colbourn Hall 411E
Office Hours: See website	Prof. Email: janzb@mail.ucf.edu
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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, production and consumption. The goal will be to give students a set of tools to critically understand and participate in contemporary culture.

Required Texts:

1. Milner, Andrew and Jeff Browitt. *Contemporary Cultural Theory: An Introduction, 3rd Edition*. Routledge, 2002.
2. Nealon, Jeffrey T. and Susan Searls Giroux. *The Theory Toolbox: Critical Concepts for the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences* (Culture and Politics Series). Rowman and Littlefield, 2003.
3. Chandler, Daniel. *Semiotics for Beginners*, online version.
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/semiotic.html>
4. Web-based readings and resources, as assigned in class.

Recommended Text:

5. Cavallaro, Dani. *Critical and Cultural Theory*. Athlone Press, 2001.

Requirements:

1. Concept Application (20% of final grade)
2. Final Project (30% of final grade)
3. Midterm (20% of final grade)
4. Final Exam (30% of final grade)

1. **Concept Application** (20% of final grade; due Tuesday Oct. 3. 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.

2. **Final Project** (30% of final grade; Prospectus due Nov. 2; Paper due Nov. 28. Length: 2500-3000 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. 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.

3. **Midterm** (20% of final grade; on Thursday, 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.

4. **Take Home Final Exam** (30% of final grade, due on or before the final exam date, Thursday Dec. 8, 4:00 p.m., in my office or the classroom): Same basic format as the midterm, covering the whole course. DO NOT EMAIL THIS EXAM - HARD COPY ONLY.

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: M&B= Milner & Browitt, *Contemporary Cultural Theory, 3rd Edition*; N&G=Nealon & Giroux, *The Theory Toolbox*; WEB= Course Website

1. Introduction (August 22, 24, 29, 31)

Reading: M&B: Chapters 1, 2; N&G: Chapters 1, 2

2. Reading Culture (September 5, 7; 12, 14; 19, 21; 26, 28; Oct. 3, 5)

Reading: M&B: Chapter 4; N&G: Chapters 3-6; Daniel Chandler, *Semiotics for Beginners*.
Concept Application Assignment Due Oct. 3.

3. Review and Midterm (October 10, 12)

Midterm on Oct. 12

4. Frankfurt School: Culture and Politics (October 17, 19; 24, 26)

Reading: M&B: Chapter 3

5. Sites of Cultural Critique: Gender, Race, Class, Sexual Orientation (Oct. 31, Nov. 2)

Reading: *M&B: Chapter 5; N&G Chapters 10-11*
Prospectus for Final Assignment Due Nov. 2

6. Cultural Production & the Place of Technology (November 7, 9)

Reading: *N&G: Chapters 7-8*

7. Contemporary Critical Theory: Traditionalism, Modernism and Postmodernism (November 14, 16)

Reading: *M&B: Chapters 6; N&G: Chapter 9*

8. Cultural Resistance (Nov. 23, 28)

Reading: *M&B: Chapters 7*
Final Paper Due Nov. 28

9. Wrap up (Nov. 30)

The Fine (but Important) Print

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

STANDARDS FOR PAPERS: I expect papers to be typewritten, in essay form (that is, not point form). They should be in 12 point Times New Roman font, with one inch margins, and double-spaced. Pages must be numbered, and the paper should be single-sided (that is, do not use both sides of the sheet of paper when printing). There should be a title page which includes the title of the paper, the name of the author, the date, the course, and the name of the professor. DO NOT put the paper in a folder, binder or plastic sleeve. I will be taking grammar, spelling, and structure into account - good ideas cannot be communicated with poor form. If the grammar or structure in a paper is severely flawed, I reserve the right to give a paper back to the student for revision without a grade (or with a reduction in grade), or fail the paper. As for citation style, I will be using the MLA format. I am open to other recognized formats (e.g., Chicago, Turabian), but whatever format you use must be used consistently. Note that the library has obtained a site license for a number of good citation programs, such as Endnote and Procite, which can aid in proper citation form. See the library's home page for these. For information on documentation styles, see http://www.uwc.ucf.edu/Writing%20Resources/writing_resources_home.htm#documentation

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF PAPERS: It is possible (and in some cases preferable) to submit your paper electronically to me. It should be sent to janzb@mail.ucf.edu as an attachment. The paper needs to be in Word (preferred), Adobe Acrobat (pdf), Rich Text Format (rtf), or WordPerfect format (wpd). It must appear identical to how it would look if you were to hand it in as a physical document (in other words, with a title page at the beginning and reference list at the end). You will receive typed comments on the paper, and it will be returned electronically. Do not include .exe or .scr files or anything that might contain a virus, and please scan your document with a virus program before you send it. Please identify yourself and the course in the subject line of the message (e.g., "<Your Name>, <Paper title> for <course name and number>"). Please make sure as well that I can reach you at the email address that you use to send the paper, in case the file does not open. NOTE: You will receive a return email from me when you send your paper in. If you do not receive an email, please assume that the paper was not received, and try contacting me again. If you do not receive confirmation, the paper may not have arrived, and so you will not receive a grade for it. The only proof that I received a paper is an email response from me. Claiming later that you sent it is not good enough, because I don't know whether you really did or not.

- **Why should I submit my paper electronically?** You will likely receive more extensive comments, as I can type faster than I can write. You may receive the paper back faster, as I often return electronic papers before class. Drawback: I cannot record a grade on a paper sent by email (see below). You will still have to find out your grade in class, or on the MyUCF grade sheet.
- **How do I know that my paper arrived?** I will respond to your email containing your paper once I have determined that the file opens. If you don't receive an email from me within a day or so, check that the paper arrived. Email is notoriously unreliable, and it is possible that something went wrong.
- **Why can't I read the returned paper?** It may be that you use Microsoft Works, instead of Microsoft Word. These programs may not be compatible. The paper should be sent in Microsoft Word, not Works. You may be able to install a document converter - see your program documentation.
- **The file opens but I can't read the comments.** What do I do? If you sent the paper in Microsoft Word, I will use the "Comments" function and the "Track Changes" option. If the program opens, but you don't see any comments, bring up the "Reviewing" toolbar (right-click on your toolbar at the top, and when you see a list of options for toolbars, make sure the "reviewing" toolbar is checked). Look for a tab marked "show", and click it. Underneath you will see several options. Make sure "Comments" and "Insertions and Deletions" at least are marked (the others wouldn't hurt, either). If you are using WordPerfect, either make sure you are in "draft" mode, or else while in "page" mode, go to the far left margin (you may have to scroll the screen to the side), and note the small tabs. When you click on one, you will be able to see comments. Please use the program that you used originally - comments may not be readable if made in one word processor and read in another.

- **Where's my grade?** See below on the communication of grades.
- **Can I use another word processor?** No. It needs to be in Word, Adobe Acrobat, Rich Text Format, or WordPerfect. It will be read on a Windows system, which may cause problems for papers written on Macs. Please make sure that your paper actually opens on a Windows system. I will not download another word processor and install it in order to read your paper.
- **Can I fax my paper to the department instead?** Sorry, the department has a policy of not accepting faxes of assignments from students.

WRITING HELP: The University Writing Center (UWC) is a free resource for UCF students. At the UWC, a trained writing consultant will work individually with you on anything you're writing (in or out of class), at any point in the writing process from brainstorming to editing. Appointments are recommended, but not required. For more information or to make an appointment, visit the UWC website at <http://www.uwc.ucf.edu>, stop by MOD 608, or call (407) 823-2197.

ATTENDANCE: I expect regular and prompt attendance from members of the class. If you cannot be at a class, let me know before-hand. I reserve the right to not accept assignments from students either if attendance has been a problem, or if a paper is seriously late without a legitimate (in my opinion) reason. This includes any paper or graded activity in the course, including the final paper and the final exam. I will only inflict this measure after having given a warning; however, if you simply never come to class, do not expect to get much sympathy at the end of the term when you want to hand in assignments.

LATE PAPERS: On late papers in general: The due dates are firm. There will be penalties for late papers. If there is a legitimate reason for a paper being late, I am willing to consider it and waive the late penalty. Illegitimate reasons include "I had too much work" (you could have started earlier); "My computer deleted my file" (make back-ups); "I'm on a team and we were away" (work that out with your coach, not me); "I couldn't think of a topic" (come & see me early). This, of course, does not exhaust the list of reasons that will not succeed. Plan ahead, and save yourself problems. Having said that, I recognize that there will sometimes be factors beyond a person's control. I will deal with these cases on an individual basis. Giving an extension in one case in no way obligates me to do it in others. The most successful appeal will a) have an argument for why an extension is justified, and b) suggest a way that the assignment will be made better by the extension.

EXAM RULES: I discourage make-up exams, as they tend not to be fair to the whole class, but I recognize that there are circumstances that are unavoidable. It is important to talk to me beforehand. I will not change final exam dates simply to accommodate travel schedules. I am especially unsympathetic if someone buys a plane ticket first, and comes to me later saying that I have to change an exam date to accommodate it. If there are other reasons that you think might be legitimate, please see me. Remember, I have to ensure fairness for the entire class, and I also have to ensure that questions do not leak out to the rest of the class prior to the scheduled final exam.

COMMUNICATION OF GRADES: I will be using the new system at UCF that allows me to report your grades to you when you log into your "MyUCF" page. The university does not allow the communication of grades to a student by email (including embedding them in documents, which means they cannot be placed on a paper emailed to me), or by posting them outside a professor's door. This is a confidentiality issue. Please do not ask me for your grade by email.

INCOMPLETES: I will only give an incomplete in very rare and unique circumstances. Simply not having time to finish work during the term is not sufficient reason. Even medical reasons may not be enough - medical withdrawal from the course is a more likely option in most cases. So, please do not take on too much in a term, thinking that it will be easy to get an incomplete and then finish the work later.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: We will discuss the nature of academic honesty in class, but a note here is warranted. Basically, your work should be your own and original to this class, and when you are drawing on the words, images, or ideas of others, this should be properly noted. What should be avoided?

- Handing in an identical (or substantially similar) paper to another person in the class.
- Using a paper from another student (e.g., a former student, or a paper from an internet paper mill).
- Using any information from a book or an internet site without proper referencing.
- Handing in work that you did for another class without discussing it with the professor first. This includes excerpts of your own writing that you cut and paste into a new paper.

The university writing center has many useful handouts on writing, including handouts on properly handling citations. If you have any question about how to properly complete an assignment, please see me. On occasion I may submit student papers to Turnitin.com, a website that checks for plagiarism. Papers submitted to that site become part of their database. Submitting a paper in this course gives consent for your paper to be added to their database.

WITHDRAWAL: It is the student's responsibility to drop or withdraw from the course if there is an unavoidable conflict or if the need should arise for another reason. Students who fail to drop before the deadline established in the curriculum catalogue will receive an F for the course. The withdrawal date for Fall 2006 is October 13.