

Critical Theory

Overview

The Designated Emphasis (DE) in Critical Theory permits interested graduate students already enrolled in UC Berkeley PhD programs to specialize in critical theory and to obtain certification of this specialization while pursuing the doctoral degree in their home departments. (The program in Critical Theory is not an independent degree-granting program.) Students admitted to the program's DE and who complete its requirements will receive a parenthetical notation to that effect on their doctoral degrees.

Critical Theory is typically associated with the work of the Frankfurt School; that ongoing tradition of theory figures significantly in the DE curriculum. However, Berkeley's program in Critical Theory broadens and extends the meaning of critical theory to include nineteenth-century philosophers of critique, as well as contemporary critical theoretical work on politics, economics, art and culture, religion, nationalism, postnationalism, and various kinds of identity formation. Above all, Critical Theory at UC Berkeley emphasizes the centrality of theoretical critique to the examination of contemporary values; the powers that organize political, social, cultural, and economic life; and modes of justification and legitimization for cultural inquiry and sociopolitical analysis.

Undergraduate Program

There is no undergraduate program in Critical Theory.

Graduate Program

Critical Theory (<https://guide.berkeley.edu/archive/2024-25/graduate/degree-programs/critical-theory/>): Designated Emphasis (DE)

Critical Theory

CRIT TH 200 Critique in 19th-Century Thought 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2018, Spring 2017, Fall 2015

This course will examine various formulations of critique in 19th-century theory. Thinkers who may be studied include Kant, Hegel, Marx, Nietzsche, and Weber, though the selection will vary by instructor. This is the "foundations" course for the Designated Emphasis in Critical Theory.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to the critical theory designated emphasis or consent of instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit without restriction.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Critical Theory Graduate Group/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Brown

CRIT TH 205 The Classical Frankfurt School: The First Generation of Critical Theory 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015

This course will explore the founding texts of the Frankfurt School's first generation: Horkheimer, Adorno, Benjamin, Marcuse, Lowenthal, and their circle. It will follow the development of critical theory through its Weimar years, American exile, and return to postwar Germany.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to the critical theory designated emphasis or consent of instructor

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Critical Theory Graduate Group/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Jay

CRIT TH 240 Contemporary Critique and Critical Theory 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2017, Fall 2016, Spring 2016

This course will explore various contemporary engagements with the foundations of critical theory in relation to other histories and locations. Topics will vary by instructor but may include: post-continental political theory, critique and the problem of political dissent and citizenship, gender and race in relation to critical practices, psychoanalysis, and literary and art theory and criticism.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to the critical theory designated emphasis or consent of instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit with instructor consent.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 3 hours of lecture per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Critical Theory Graduate Group/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CRIT TH 290 Critical Theory Elective 2 - 4 Units

Terms offered: Fall 2025, Fall 2024, Fall 2023

Critical Theory electives are taught by core and affiliated faculty in the Critical Theory program and offer important treatments of theoretical materials significant to the intellectual traditions of the program's course of study in nineteenth-century social theory and philosophy, Frankfurt School and related currents in theory and criticism, and contemporary critical theory. In a typical Critical Theory elective, theoretical materials are presented in dialogue with an anthropological, artistic/aesthetic, economic, educational, historical, philosophical, political, rhetorical, sociological, or other disciplinary matrix that constitutes the course's primary materials for study and inquiry.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to the Critical Theory Designated Emphasis or consent of the instructor

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit with instructor consent.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2-3 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Critical Theory Graduate Group/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

CRIT TH 298 Critical Theory Special Study 4 Units

Terms offered: Spring 2017, Spring 2016

Advanced study in interpretive approaches within the field of critical theory, focusing on the question of how critical theory enters into the framing of a long-term research project. We will consider the status and limits of theory, the relation between literary and social theory, reading practices, and archival research.

Rules & Requirements

Prerequisites: Admission to the Critical Theory Designated Emphasis or consent of the instructor. This course is intended for graduate students who are working on their prospectus or dissertation

Repeat rules: Course may be repeated for credit with instructor consent.

Hours & Format

Fall and/or spring: 15 weeks - 2 hours of seminar per week

Additional Details

Subject/Course Level: Critical Theory Graduate Group/Graduate

Grading: Letter grade.

Instructor: Butler