**CRITICAL THEORY**

**Course descriptor**

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| Title of the course | | **Critical Theory** | | | | | | |
| Title of the Academic Programme | | Philology | | | | | | |
| Type of the course[[1]](#footnote-1) | | Elective | | | | | | |
| Prerequisites | | |  | | --- | | Ability to read difficult theoretical texts in English | | | | | | | |
| ECTS workload | | 4 | | | | | | |
| Total indicative study hours | | Directed Study | | Self-directed study | | | Total | |
| 46 | | 152 | | | 106 | |
| Course Overview | | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | | This course serves as an introduction to the ideas of some of the most important thinkers in the broad and dynamic field of modern “critical theory.” Topics we will explore include: the mechanisms of ideology, the history of knowledge, the instability of signifying systems, conceptions of the social imaginary, the interrelationship between culture and imperialism, psychoanalysis and the subject under “late capitalism,” as well as theories of the “post-human.” We will examine theorists such as Slavoj Žižek, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Benedict Anderson, Georges Bataille, Edward Said, Jean Baudrillard, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, Deleuze and Guatarri, Gayatri Spivak, Judith Butler, Donna Haraway, and others. *Readings and discussion in English.*  In the first module the focus will be on ideological constructs, the social imaginary, and culture.  In the second module the focus will be on subjectivities, the psyche, and the self. | | | | | | | | | |
| Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)[[2]](#footnote-2) | | |  | | --- | | General objectives of the course include:   * • provide experience reading complicated theoretical work written in English (or English translation); * • hone students’ skills in discussion and critical thinking; * • prepare the students who may be interested in graduate-level work in Anglophone countries for engaging in theoretically informed academic discourse; * • convey the multiplicity of perspectives available for advanced work in the humanities. | | | | | | | |
| Indicative Course Content | | | | | | | | |
| **№** | **Topic / Course Chapter** | | **Total** | | **Directed Study** | | | **Self-directed Study** |
| **Lectures** | **Tutorials** | |
|  | |  | | --- | | Ideological Constructs, the Social Imaginary, Culture | | | 76 | | 10 | 12 | | 54 |
|  | |  | | --- | | Subjectivities, the Psyche, and the Self | | | 76 | | 12 | 12 | | 52 |
| **Total study hours** | | | 152 | | 22 | 24 | | 106 |
| Teaching and Learning Methods | | |  | | --- | | Lectures, seminars, presentations, reading and writing assignments, video screenings. | | | | | | | |
| Indicative Assessment Methods and Strategy | | **Written in-class test** at the end of the first module 25%  Short essay questions on key topics from the lectures.  *Some sample questions:*   * • Explain Edward Said’s conception of Orientalism. * • What does Bataille mean by “the accursed share” within his conception of “general economy?” * • Why do Adorno and Horkheimer argue that enlightenment has turned into a deception?   **2 oral presentations** 10 minutes, one in each module 30%  Students will be given a choice of topics. The presentations should demonstrate a clear understanding of the theoretical concepts involved; they should cite and analyze key passages from relevant texts; and they should offer a critical assessment. The presentation should conclude with a question (or two) addressed to the class for further discussion.  *Some sample topics:*   * • Žižek’s conception of the Big Other. * • The critique of Freudian psychoanalysis in Deleuze and Guatarri. * • Post-humanism as a new ethical imperative.   **Class participation and attendance** 10%  **Final Examination Paper** 35%  (about 2000 words): You are free to choose your own topic. The one requirement is that your analysis should draw on the work of at least two theorists that we have covered (or the equivalent). You may want to apply theoretical perspectives to analyzing a literary text. Or you may write on a purely theoretical topic—how different theorists approach some common problem.  *Some examples of purely theoretical topics:*   * • Human beings and machines in Deleuze and Guatarri, Donna Haraway * • The rejection of the subject in Deleuze and Guatarri, Judith Butler * • Language and money in Foucault and Derrida * • Colonialism and the subject in Fanon and Spivak * • Literary narratives in Said and Benedict Anderson * • Gender, sexuality, and social control in Foucault and Judith Butler * • The oedipal complex in Freud and Lacan * • Consumerism and desire in Baudrillard and Žižek * • The system of signs and differences in Derrida and Baudrillard | | | | | | |
| Readings / Indicative Learning Resources[[3]](#footnote-3) | | Mandatory  1) LaCapra, D. *History, Literature, Critical Theory*. Cornell University Press, 2013. *ProQuest*  Optional  1) Osborne, T. *The Structure of Modern Cultural Theory*. Manchester University Press, 2008. *ProQuest*  2) Taylor, D. *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*. Routledge, 2014. *ProQuest*  3) Wortham, S. M., and S. Morgan Wortham. *The Derrida Dictionary.* Bloomsbury, 2010. *ProQuest*  4) Tally, Robert T. *Fredric Jameson: The Project of Dialectical* | | | | | | |
| Course Instructor | | Vadim Shkolnikov | | | | | | |

1. ***Notes:***

   Type of the course - core (mandatory); optional or elective. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO) - for the academic programmes which are exposed to international accreditation or other forms of external evaluation, the list of ILO must be complemented with “Mapping of Programme and Course/module learning outcomes”. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Indicative Learning Resources - to be filled either in the Course descriptor or in the Course Syllabus. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)