

Adorno and Benjamin

Dr. Rocío Zambrana
zambrana@uoregon.edu
Office Hours: R 2-4
SCH 242

PHIL 463/563
MW 10-11:50
123 McKenzie Hall

Course Description:

This seminar will examine TW Adorno and Walter Benjamin's notions of critique. We will focus on the intersection between history, aesthetics, and politics in their work and assess the epistemological, metaphysical, and ethical dimensions of this intersection.

Required Texts:

1. Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Volume 1: 1913-1926*
2. Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*
3. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*
4. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Some Secondary Sources:

1. Caygill, *The Color of Experience*
2. Benjamin, *The Problems of Modernity: Adorno and Benjamin*
3. Buck-Morss, *The Origins of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute*
4. Gilloch, *Walter Benjamin: Critical Constellations*
5. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*
6. Foster, *Adorno: The Recovery of Experience*
7. Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction*
8. Rose, *The Melancholy Science*
9. Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*
10. *Adorno and Benjamin: The Complete Correspondence 1928-1940*

Required texts are available for purchase at the Duckstore. Those marked PDFs below are available on Blackboard. Secondary Sources are on reserve at Knight Library.

Course Structure and Requirements:

Attendance:

You are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. More than 3 absences will result in a failing final grade, unless proof of illness or emergency is provided.

Participation:

Lectures and discussions will presuppose familiarity with the assigned readings for the class session. Having read the assigned text and coming prepared to participate in class discussion are requirements.

Commentaries:

On weeks, 3, 6, and 9, you will hand in a 2-page commentary on one concept of your choice discussed in the weeks prior to the commentary (in week 3, engaging texts read in weeks 1 and 2, so on). You must merely *explain* the concept that you have chosen. You should *not* respond to the argument critically or constructively – the commentary should be merely *exegetical*.

Prospectus:

You will submit a one-page prospectus stating the topic of your paper and the argument that you intend to pursue. Graduate students must include an annotated bibliography with at least 3 secondary sources that you intend to use.

Final Paper:

Undergraduate Students: This 2,000 wd. paper should develop further—both exegetically and critically—one of your commentaries.

Graduate Students: This 3,000 wd. paper should develop a thesis about a section or problem in Marx. You must situate your thesis within relevant secondary literature. Engaging secondary sources is a *requirement*.

Guidelines for papers:

- clarity: the paper should have a clearly defined topic and thesis.
- accuracy: the paper should present an author's position in a fair way.
- assessment: the paper should evaluate the author's position, and bring to bear on the text or issue your own view; you must defend your view.

All of your work must be typewritten (12 pt. font, Times New Roman, double-spaced). You will be expected to cite philosophical texts that you are quoting, paraphrasing, or using as reference appropriately, including secondary literature and online resources.

All papers are due by 2pm at the Philosophy Department. Undergraduate students must also submit the paper electronically via SafeAssign. No late papers will be accepted, unless accompanied by proof of illness or emergency.

Learning Outcomes:

By the end of the course, students will be able to identify, track, and evaluate arguments and subarguments within a philosophical text. Students will also be able to construct a critical essay on themes in philosophy, political theory, and criticism. Finally, students will be familiar with basic concepts in twentieth century German critical social and political theory.

Statement on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the intentional or unintentional unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, and so on). Plagiarized material may be derived from books, journals, Internet postings, student or faculty papers, and so on including the purchase or "outsourcing" of written assignments for a course. *Plagiarism is grounds for failing the course.* For more information, see <http://www.libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>.

Grading Standard:

- A+ = superb. No mistakes, well-written, well-researched, and pursues an original thesis.
A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.
B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.
C = OK. Some errors, but basic grasp of the material.
D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.
F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or complete lack of effort.

Grading Rubric:

Class participation	10%
Commentaries (3)	30% (10% each)
Prospectus	10%
Final paper	50%

Accommodation for a Disability:

If you have a documented disability and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please make arrangements to meet with me soon.

Senate Task Force to Address Sexual Violence and Survivor Support:

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more.

Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need.

If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.

Classroom Etiquette:

Students must turn off cellular telephones for the duration of the class. You must request permission to record any session. Please be advised that recordings are for personal use and should not be disseminated – e.g.: posted online, etc.

Schedule of Classes and Readings:

The schedule of readings is subject to change during the quarter. All changes will be announced in advance via email.

Wk. 1

- M 29 Introduction to the Course and Syllabus, plus Benjamin, The Life of Students, SW
W 1 Benjamin, The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism, SW

Wk. 2

- M 6 Guest Lecture by Ken Calhoon (COLT), Adorno, *Philosophy of New Music*, pp. 1-50.
PDF
W 8 Class Cancelled – Zambrana giving a set of lectures in Santiago, Chile

Wk. 3

- M 13 Benjamin, Epistemo-Critical Prologue, from *Origin of the German Mourning-Play*, PDF
W 15 Benjamin, Critique of Violence, SW

Wk. 4

- M 20 Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility, PDF
Recommended: Little History of Photography
W 22 Benjamin, The Author as Producer, PDF

Wk. 5

- M 27 Benjamin, “The Storyteller,” and “Experience and Poverty,” PDF
W 29 Benjamin, Convolute N, *Arcades Project*, PDF

Wk. 6

- M 3 Benjamin, Theses on the Philosophy of History PDF
W 5 Adorno, *The Actuality of Philosophy* and *The Idea of Natural History*, PDF

Wk. 7

- M 10 Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Preface and The Concept of Enlightenment
W 12 Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment

Wk. 8

- M 17 Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Excursus II: Juliette or Enlightenment and Morality
W 19 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, Dedication, pt 1: 5-11, 16-25, 42-50, pt 2: 64-68, 81-82,
92-100, pt. 3: 122, 143-153.

Wk. 9

- M 24 Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, continuation
W 26 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Introduction

Wk. 10

- M 1 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Concepts and Categories
W 3 Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, Meditations on Metaphysics