

**Joshua Schuster**

## **What Is a Critical Theorist? Methods and Skills**

This course is designed for incoming MA and PhD students, although anyone is welcome to take it. The aim of the course is to study some examples of what it is to be a critical theorist. We will seek to develop more robust definitions of the following: theory, critique, troubling, staying with the trouble, criticism (literary and cultural), problems with critique. We will not cover all possible examples of how one becomes a critical theorist; instead, we focus on some select themes and case studies. Several of the readings will be taken from the comprehensive exam list.

This course will also feature workshops on how to build skills towards becoming a theorist at the Theory Centre. The workshops may be on the following topics: grant writing, TA skills, writing for publication and conferences, preparing to write the thesis, careers in and out of academia. The course will also feature several visits from core and associate faculty who will discuss their work and insights into how Theory students can make the most of the program. Students will also have the opportunity to meet visiting speakers for a more informal session to discuss the academic experiences of working as a theorist. Students will be required to attend a designated number of talks during the semester at the Theory Centre.

Sample schedule:

Week 1

Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Non-Moral Sense," excerpts from *Twilight of the Idols*

Week 2

Plato, *The Sophist*  
Workshop on grants

Week 3

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction, Ch 12, 14, Conclusion  
Workshop on TA duties

Week 4

Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction; "What Is Enlightenment?"  
Foucault, "What Is Enlightenment?" "What Is Critique?"  
Visit from guest faculty

Week 5

Horkheimer, "Traditional and Critical Theory"  
Adorno "Critique," "Cultural Criticism and Society"  
Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory"

Week 6

Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*  
Fredric Jameson, "The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology"

Week 7

John Crowe Ransom, "Criticism, Inc."  
Paul de Man, "The Resistance to Theory"  
Workshop on publication

Week 8

Judith Butler, from *Gender Trouble*  
Lee Edelman, "The Future Is Kid's Stuff"

Week 9

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading; or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction is About You"  
Bruno Latour, "Has Critique Run Out of Steam?"  
Rita Felski, "After Suspicion"

Week 10

Edward Said, "Empire, Geography, and Culture," "Themes of Resistance Culture"  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses"  
Visit from guest faculty

Week 11

Roland Barthes – *The Pleasure of the Text*  
Workshop on thesis development

Week 12

Donna Haraway, from *Staying with the Trouble*  
Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy"  
Workshop on careers in and out of academia