

Dead White Men: Constructions of Time (Critical Theory Core)

Fall 2012

M–W–F, 1:10-2:10pm

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This course is an introduction to the study of critical theory, and is organized in such a way as to benefit equally beginners and advanced students. The shift away from medieval feudalism and theocracy (wherein divinity grounded truth and political authority) to the modern capitalist economy and secular modes of thought entailed unforeseen reconceptualizations of time. We shall examine them by tracing two central developments that define modernity. First – as a triple consequence of the gradual obliteration of religious faith as the basis for legitimizing truth and political power – the emergence of (1) ideology and (2) biopolitics, and (3) the secularization of transcendence, i.e., its inclusion within the plane of immanence. Second, the concomitant double reconceptualization of secular time: on the one hand, as human history progressing toward a certain *telos* (end or aim), and, on the other hand, as a machinic or formal time within which elements of an autonomous structure (i.e., one that is not controlled by humans) determine each other through their inter-relations.

The course fulfills the Writing GER.

Authors we shall read include: Descartes, Pascal, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Saussure, Lévi-Strauss, Freud, Adorno, Gramsci, Kojève, Lacan, Althusser, Blumenberg, Balibar, Foucault, Pfaller, Karatani, Holland, Žižek.