

The background of the slide features a light teal color with several thick, expressive black brushstrokes. These strokes are oriented diagonally, with some running from the top-left towards the bottom-right and others from the top-right towards the bottom-left, creating a dynamic, abstract pattern.

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

critical theory

WINTER TERM 2024

Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt

- 3rd February 1923
- Felix Weil – a founder
- Gestapo closed the Institute in 1933...
- at Columbia University NY, since 1934...
- Reestablished in Frankfurt in 1950s



Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt

- Critical theory
 - Marxist-inspired social philosophy
- Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse
but also: Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm

main inspirations and references

Karl Marx, Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Immanuel Kant, Georg Hegel, Georg Lukacs, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud

but mostly: Marx, Weber, Freud...

what is critical in critical theory?

- Critical theory refers to a critique of empirical sciences and the philosophy of positivism on which they are based.
- Interdisciplinary research that combines philosophy and social science with the practical aim of furthering emancipation.
- Historical background: Bolshevisim in Russia, Germany's defeat in WW1, rise of fascism, growing anti-Semitism

Dialectic of Enlightenment

1944

Adorno and
Horkheimer

- The Enlightenment period produced contradictory developments
- Discontinuity of religions and traditions, time of progress, technological advancement vs. "irrationality of rationality"...
- Reason and bureaucracy made social life dehumanized
- They both returned to West Germany and Frankfurt in 1950s

the critic of mass culture and culture industry

- Culture industry and technological rationality together create a new form of totalitarian social order – where an individual is to be a standardized consumer of standardized consumption.
- It is a feature of all advanced, industrialized societies (regardless if they are fascist, democratic, socialistic...)

Jürgen Habermas (1929 -)

The so-called second generation of
Frankfurt School

Adorno's assistant in 1950s and
German post-war public intellectual

Marx-influenced and Weber-
influenced

Social philosophy as emancipatory
project



Communicative action

- Process in which individuals come to mutual understanding and consensus through open, noncoercive debate and discussion freed from the corrosive effects of money, power and manipulation...
- Process that outgrowths rationality – integration into community, security of socialisation and formalisation of social identities
- Negotiating the shared meaning...

The Public Sphere and New Social Movements

- Hope in new social movements
- Crucial role of public sphere

Patricia Hill Collins (1948 -)

Theory integrating feminist theory,
critical theory, poststructuralism
and postmodernism.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EXWUzxTI_fA



Standpoint epistemology

- What one knows is affected by the standpoint in society
- Influenced by Dorothy Smith
- Critical means commitment to justice for one's own group and other groups
- Intersectionality

Matrix of domination

- One's position in society is made up of multiple contiguous standpoints rather than just one essentialist standpoint
- Oppression on three levels: of personal biography, of group or community, of cultural context created by race, class and gender...