

Soc. 615  
Spring 2008 CRN 35949  
Mondays 5-8pm

Prof. Liberman  
833PLC, x65008  
liberman@uoregon.edu

## Adorno's Negative Dialectics

The seminar will devote its energies to understanding and pursuing the themes raised by Adorno in his last work, *Negative Dialectics* (1966), considered his *magnum opus*. We will consider how negative dialectics differs from dialectics, how reason and categories of thinking can be demythologized, how epistemology and Marxist analyses might be conjoined, and we will take up the many contradictions and incoherencies in contemporary European and American social theorizing that Adorno so carefully identified.

Because the book is very challenging, drawing deep draughts from all of the major streams of contemporary social, political, and philosophical reflection (and drawing illustrations from music, art, and contemporary culture), our principal aim for the term will be only to complete a close reading of it, with something approximating the comprehension it deserves; however, we will also draw upon some reflections by Herbert Marcuse, Fredric Jameson, and Jacques Derrida in order to extend and develop our inquiries. Adorno covers a broad range of modern thought – critical theory, political economy, phenomenology, sociology of culture, etc. – and students can invest their energies in their preferred areas of inquiry.

### Books

Required: Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (we will use the Beacon Press edition, even though it is soon to be superceded by a new University of Minnesota Press translation, not yet ready for publication.)

Recommended:

Herbert Marcuse, "Philosophy and Critical Theory," "The Concept of Essence," in *Negations*

Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, The Persistence of the Dialectic*

Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form*, pp. 3-59

Jacques Derrida, "Wears and Tears," *Specters of Marx*, pp. 77-94

There are many helpful online resources.

Course Requirements:

Weeks two through seven students will prepare a 2-3 pp. typewritten précis of the week's readings, which are due at the beginning of each seminar. Please note that a précis should not include opinions, or arguments for positions, but only seek to accurately present the views to be found in what has been read.

Each student will also write a course paper of 7-10pp., in which particular perspectives, viewpoints, or topics may be pursued. Attendance is expected, but roll will not be taken. Evaluation (100pts) will be based upon the seminar papers (6 x 10pts) and the final paper (40 pts.).

Syllabus  
for Soc 615 Adorno's Negative Dialectics

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Assignment Due</b>
March 30	Introduction	
April 6	Adorno's University Lectures	<i>Lectures on Negative Dialectics</i> , pp. 1-43, 55-75, & 81-3
April 13	The Scope of Adorno's Project	<i>Negative Dialectics</i> , pp. 3-57
April 20	Ontology and Epistemology	pp. 61-96 (97-131 optional)
April 27	Negative Dialectics I	pp. 135-78
May 4	Negative Dialectics II	pp. 178-215
May 11	Freedom*	pp. 216-47, 257-87, & 298-99
May 18	Hegel, History, & Dialectics*	pp. 300-360
May 25	Memorial Day Holiday	
June 1	Late Reflections*	pp. 361-408

\* Students will take the initiative in leading these seminars.