ENGL 3315: Introduction to Critical Theory

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- *Student emails will receive a reply within two business days. If you do not hear back from me within this timeframe, please confirm that I received your email.*

Office: Classroom Hall 326
Office Hours:
- Tuesdays: 12-2 pm
- Thursdays: 12-2 pm
- Fridays: 10-1 pm
- Gladly by appointment

Course Web Site: http://tamusa.blackboard.com/

Catalogue Description: This course introduces students to concepts, traditions, and debates in critical theory, and provides experience in the application of critical theory in English studies as a discipline. Prerequisite ENGL 2370.

This course begins with the emergence of Critical Theory from the Frankfurt School during a time of historical crisis in the lives of many following WWI. We will then examine a primary facet of critical theory's focus as it has developed in the 21st Century: the intersection of knowledge and power. As Critical Theory interrogates the relationship between knowledge and power, it is focused on equipping us with the tools to both more deeply understand the world around us *and* work in this world of complex problems without clear solutions. To build our understandings of Critical Theory as frameworks for action, we will both learn about theory *and* apply theory in this course. The context of our analysis and application will be archives. Determining the records communities keep to tell their stories and the stories they tell about other communities is complex and contested work. Museums and histories that tell the stories of archival collections are never neutral. Instead, they emerge at the intersection of power and knowledge. They are spaces actively shaped by action informed by theory.

Student learning outcomes

- Understand the roots of Critical Theory
- Understand critical theory's evolution to address contemporary issues
- Trace the primary tenants of critical theory with regard to knowledge and power across a variety of archival contexts
- Evaluate archives using the frameworks engaged in the course
- Apply these frameworks to action through the creation of an archive and zine that shares this archive with university peers

Required Texts
All readings are available through Blackboard.

Technology

If you have a laptop computer, please bring it to class each meeting. If you do not have a laptop, another device such as a tablet or smartphone that enables you to get online is acceptable for regular class meetings. Please let me know if you do not have access to a laptop, tablet, or smartphone that you can use during class.

All work, including work that either draws directly from Generative AI or work that was created in collaboration with Generative AI must be cited. If you are using a Generative AI platform to support your work in this class, prompt the platform for a citation that includes the prompts you used for your work.

Grading

This course will use labor-based grading. Grading this way is meant to encourage students' openness to new material and experimentation without fear of failure. Failure is a very productive space in a course such as this. Labor-based grading creates a space where students can lean into this without productive failure in the class equating to a failing grade overall. In addition to attending class and completing the readings, you will have five tasks to complete this semester.