

Critical Theory Final Evaluative and Analytical Essay

Overview & Description:

In the first unit of the course, we read Max Horkheimer's essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" and learned how Critical Theory is an intellectual project that aligns the social aims of theoretical practice towards the furtherance of liberatory political projects. The subsequent six units examined specific intellectual traditions that have been categorized as part Critical Theory in general (e.g. Structuralism, Post-Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, Marxist, Critical Race, and Feminist/Queer Theory).

For this final essay, you are asked to compare two of these traditions theoretically and analytically and evaluate them in respects to how Horkheimer describes the purpose of Critical Theory. In other word, you will need to make an argument about two different traditions of Critical Theory that evaluates their merits and limitations as interpretive methods in the service of Critical Theory and answer the following question: Which tradition better achieves the purpose of Critical Theory as an intellectual and political project? Why and How?

This means that you will need to explain and assess the way in which different traditions of Critical Theory come to:

- illuminate specific aspects of culture objects over others,
- provide interpretive guides to aspects of a cultural object, and
- shuttle in presuppositions and axioms that guide analysis.

This evaluation and comparison must be done both theoretically and analytically. By theoretically, I mean that you must evaluate each tradition through a focused and purposeful synthesis of primary text from the class that compares and contrast them. For instance, one could examine how sexuality is theorized from the standpoint of psychoanalysis and feminist critical theory. By analytically, I mean that you must also demonstrate the merits and limitation of specific traditions of Critical Theory by showing how they bear out in an analysis of the same cultural object. For instance, how would a psychoanalytical theory interpret Disney's *Tarzan* in respect to its representation of sexuality in contrast to the way feminist critical theory would go about it? Furthermore, given your knowledge of the Critical Theory as intellectual project, which tradition better achieves it? Why?

You may should use your prior essays (e.g. What is Critical Theory essay and your two short analysis essays) as the starting point for this longer essay. With that said, I expect the essays to be revised substantially in light of this assignment. Thus, you will be assessed harshly if one simply cuts-and-pastes your past short essay into this one. Also, the cultural text that you will analyze through two different traditions should be the 4 cultural text from the class (e.g. *Tarzan*, *Curious George*, *Where the Wild Things Are*, and *Rumpelstiltskin*). You analyze one outside of class but it will need be approved by me.

Audience and Rhetorical Situation: Assume that you are writing an academic paper for an undergraduate conference on Critical Theory. Also assume that your audience has NOT read this assignment and will attend your conference session because your title piqued their interest. Your introduction should explain the problem-at-issue before presenting your claim. Because this is an

academic paper in Humanities, follow the manuscript form of the Modern Language Association Style Guide

In preparation for the essay, you will need to submit an initial draft for peer review. The peer review will be guided and will require you to write a letter to your peer about their draft. This will be facilitated through webcourses. You must complete this task to receive full credit on the final draft of the essay. If you do not, the essay will be penalized an entire grade.

Essay Requirements and Deadlines:

Essay Requirements:

- The essay must have a claim about the two different tradition of Critical Theory that addresses the following questions: Which tradition better achieves the purpose of Critical Theory as an intellectual and political project? Why and How?
- The essay must use the key concepts from both traditions of Critical Theory
- The essay must explain the key concepts and synthesize them with prompts purpose in mind
- The essay must purposefully use evidence from the cultural object in the form of quotes and detailed descriptions,
- The essay must interpret evidence from the cultural object based on the ideas of the traditions of Critical Theory in order to show the connection between the traditions and their merits and limitations
- The essay must be minimally 1900 words in length but not go over 3000 words.
- Complete the Peer Review of the Essay. If you do not complete rough draft and peer review, the final essay will be docked an entire grade.
- Use MLA citation

Submission Process and Deadlines: For this final essay, you will be submitting two different drafts and a peer review. The first one will be a draft for peer review while the second one will be a final draft. All will be submitted electronically through the class webcourse site, including the peer review. For the peer review, you will be given guidelines for you to provide written feedback to your fellow classmates. Below, I have listed the submission date and time for each draft/assignment.

Draft/Assignment	Submission Date
Peer Review Draft	Wednesday, April 26 th @ 11:59pm
Peer Review	Friday, April 28 th @ 11:59pm
Final Draft	Wednesday, May 3 rd @ 11:59pm

Assessment Criteria and Rubrics: (60 Points Possible)

Introduction and Claim											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Explains problem to be addressed; provides necessary background; ends with a contestable claim; claim answers question			Problem statement missing; problem poorly focused; claim unclear, not contestable, and/or does not fully answer question				Paper begins without context or background; paper lacks claim; reader confused about what writer is attempting to do				
Quality of Ideas and Argument											
20	18	16	14	12	10	8	6	4	2	0	
Strong insights; remains focused on question; effectively links course materials to question; good analytical reasoning and focused and purposeful synthesis of course material			Some good insights; loses focus on question or gaps in argument; connections between question and course material vague; unsupported generalization				Fails to adequately answer question; contains no clear argument; descriptive rather than analytical; tends to summarize course material rather than purposefully synthesize				
Use of Evidence											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Excellent use of different course materials to support argument, effectively provides examples, evidence, and appropriate quotes			Uneven use of evidence and examples; evidence not always directly relevant; over-reliance on a single source; significance of quotes not readily apparent or not interpreted				Lack of evidence and examples; evidence, if provided, not related to overall argument; limited reference to course materials				
Organization and Clarity											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Clear, well-organized paper; paragraphs begin with topic sentences related to claim; topic sentences fully developed in each paragraph; paper unfolds in the development of a line of argument, reader doesn't get lost			Generally sound organization; some topics sentences strong, others weak; some paragraphs not fully developed; reader occasionally confused by awkward organization, unclear sentences, fuzzy ideas				Poor organization, lacks clarity; paper not organized around coherent paragraphs; paragraphs lack topic sentences; prose is hard to follow and understand				
Editing and Manuscript Form											
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	
Flawless paper, or an occasional minor error. Looks like a professional humanities paper; notes follow MLA format; contains an academic title			Distractions due to spelling, punctuation, grammar errors; writer seems a bit careless. Varies from MLA style and format in a few ways; contains non-academic title.				Paper seriously marred by mistakes in grammar, spelling, and punctuation; lack of editing. Paper does not follow MLA style and format; paper lacks a title				