

**ICS Calendar Title:** Religion, Critical Theory, and Habermas  
**ICS Course Code:** ICS 220505 W11  
**Instructor:** Dr. Ron Kuipers  
**Term and Year:** Thursdays, 1:30-4:30pm, Winter 2011  
**Last Updated:** December 15, 2010

## 1. Course description

1 Peter 3:15 enjoins Christ’s followers to be ever ready to give an account of the hope that is in them. Twenty centuries later, Jürgen Habermas has put forward a robust social theory that describes the shape such accounting should take if it is to be considered properly communicative and critical. While maintaining a stance of “methodical atheism” in this discussion, Habermas’ work also exhibits a positive appreciation for many dimensions of the Judeo-Christian religious heritage, especially its moral and ethical dimensions. In this critical appreciation, Habermas’ thought exhibits continuity with his “Frankfurt School” forebears in the intellectual tradition known as Critical Theory. Many of these theorists took religion to be integral to modern social and cultural evolution. Religion must be studied, they felt, because, as in the case of art and the culture industry, it can both display forms of pathological socialization and yet be a resource for a critique of, and eventual emancipation from, such a repressive reality—a supposedly enlightened age which Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno have described as “radiant with triumphant calamity.” After exploring key writings of the first generation of critical theorists on the social relevance of religion, the seminar will culminate in an in-depth study of Jürgen Habermas’ contribution to this discussion.

## 2. Reading Schedule

1: Jan. 13 17 pp.	Introduction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eduardo Mendieta, “Introduction—Religion as Critique: Theology as Social Critique and Enlightened Reason.” In <i>The Frankfurt School on Religion [FSR]</i>, 1-17</li> </ul>
2: Jan. 20 53 pp.	Jacob Klapwijk's <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment I</i> Chs. 1-5
3: Jan. 27 44 pp.	Jacob Klapwijk's <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment II</i> Chs. 6-9
4: Feb. 3 36 pp.	Ernst Bloch and Erich Fromm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ernst Bloch, “On the Original History of the Third Reich”; “Not Hades, But Heaven on Earth”; “Hunger, 'Something in a Dream', 'God of Hope', Thing-For-Us”; “Marx and the End of Alienation.” in <i>FSR</i>, 21-57.</li> </ul>
5: Feb. 10 43 pp.	Leo Löwenthal and Herbert Marcuse <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leo Löwenthal, “The Demonic: Project for a Negative Philosophy of Religion.” in <i>FSR</i>, 101-112</li> <li>Herbert Marcuse, “A Study on Authority: Luther, Calvin, Kant.” In <i>FSR</i>, 115-145</li> </ul>
6: Feb. 17 60 pp.	Theodor W. Adorno <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>“Reason and Sacrifice”; “Reason and Revelation”; “Meditations on Metaphysics.” In <i>FSR</i>, 149-209.</li> </ul>

: Feb. 21-25	Reading Week—no class
7: Mar. 2 55 p.	Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Max Horkheimer, “Theism and Atheism”; “The Jews and Europe”; “Religion and Philosophy”; “Observations on the Liberalization of Religion.” In <i>FSR</i>, 213-256.</li> <li>• Walter Benjamin, “Capitalism as Religion”; “Theologico-Political Fragment”; “Theses on the Philosophy of History”. In <i>FSR</i>, 259-273.</li> </ul>
8: Mar. 9 46 pp.	Critical Theory and Hermeneutics: The Habermas-Gadamer Debate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hans-Georg Gadamer, “The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem.” In <i>Philosophical Hermeneutics</i>, 3-17.</li> <li>• Jürgen Habermas, “The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality.” In <i>Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy, and Critique</i>, 181-211.</li> </ul>
9: Mar. 16 55 pp.	Intervention: Paul Ricoeur's Critical Theory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paul Ricoeur, “Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology”; “Ideology and Utopia.” In <i>From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II</i>, 270-324</li> </ul>
10: Mar. 23 66 pp.	Habermas I <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eduardo Mendieta, “Introduction.” In <i>Religion and Rationality: Essays on God, Reason and Modernity [RR]</i>. 1-36.</li> <li>• Jürgen Habermas, “The German Idealism of the Jewish Philosophers”; “On the Difficulty of Saying No.” In <i>RR</i>, 37-66.</li> </ul>
11: Mar. 30 62 pp.	Habermas II <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jürgen Habermas, “Transcendence from Within, Transcendence in this World”; “To Seek to Salvage an Unconditional Meaning Without God is a Futile Undertaking: Reflections on a Remark of Max Horkheimer”; “Communicative Freedom and Negative Theology: Questions for Michael Theunissen.” In <i>RR</i> 67-128.</li> </ul>
12: Apr. 06 61 pp.	Habermas III <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jürgen Habermas, “Israel or Athens: Where does Anamnestic Reason Belong? Johannes Baptist Metz on Unity Amidst Multicultural Plurality”; “Tracing the Other of History in History: Gershom Scholem's <i>Sabbatai Ševi</i>”; “A Conversation About God and the World; Interview with Eduardo Mendieta.” In <i>RR</i>, 129-167.</li> <li>• Jürgen Habermas, “Faith and Knowledge” ; “On the Relation Between the Secular Liberal State and Religion.” In <i>FSR</i>, 327-348.</li> </ul>
13: Apr. 13 64 pp.	Habermas and the Pope <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, <i>The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion</i></li> </ul>

### 3. Course requirements:

*Total reading:* 1250 pages, including research for paper, of which approximately 40-60 pages per week is required to prepare for class.

*In-seminar leadership:* In order to structure class discussion in a way that is both meaningful to students as well as guided by a close reading of the assigned texts, each week different students will take turns introducing the readings for that class. The goal for these presentations, however, is manifestly *not* that of complete exegetical coverage of the assigned reading. Instead, the presentation will *begin* with the most pressing question that the assigned reading raises for the student. This question might be pressing for intellectual, but also existential and religious reasons. After stating the question, the student will pinpoint the *particular* location(s) in the text where that question emerged for him or her, and then go on to offer a *close reading* of that limited portion of text. This close reading should take the form of a line-by-line analysis of the selected text, complete with suggested interpretation *and* explanation of why that portion of text raises the question it does. This interpretation may in turn radiate out from that selection and touch on other parts of the assigned text, but again, complete coverage is neither required nor requested. I will provide formative assessments of these in-seminar leadership assignments throughout the course, so they are to be submitted to me after the class in which they are used. They will also be used to assess the seminar leadership portion of the overall class evaluation.

*Course paper:* One course paper whose theme arises from in-class reading and discussion. Length: Master's: 3000–4000 words; Doctoral: 5000–7000 words. *A substantive outline*, including tentative thesis statement (50-100 words), outline, and proposed extra reading is *due on Thursday, March 2, 2010*. The *paper* is *due on Friday, May 27, 2010*.

### 4. Description and weighting of elements to be evaluated:

Class participation: 20%; Seminar Leadership: 20%; Paper: 60%.

### 5. Required Texts

Gadamer, Hans Georg. 1976. The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem. In *Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Ed. and Trans. David E. Linge. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1976, 3-17. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3248 .G3113 1977x]

Habermas, Jürgen. 2002. *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL51 .H23 2002]

\_\_\_\_\_. 1980. The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality. In *Contemporary Hermeneutics: Hermeneutics as Method, Philosophy, and Critique*. Ed. Josef Bleicher. London: Routledge, 181-211. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BD241 .B58 ; Robarts Library: BD241 .B58]

- Habermas, Jürgen and Joseph Ratziner. 2006. *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*. San Francisco, Ignatius Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL2747.8 .H3213 2006]
- Klapwijk, Jacob. 2010. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Critical Theory and the Messianic Light*. Trans. C.L. Yallop and P.M. Yallop. Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.7 .K55 2010]
- Mendieta, Eduardo, ed. 2005. *The Frankfurt School on Religion: Key Writings by the Major Thinkers*. New York: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BL60 .F68 2005]
- Ricoeur, Paul. 1991. Hermeneutics and the Critique of Ideology. In *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*. Trans Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 270-307. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430.R553 D813 1991]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. Ideology and Utopia. In *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics, II*. Trans Kathleen Blamey and John B. Thompson. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 308-324. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .R553 D813 1991]

## 6. Recommended Texts

- Adams, Nicholas. 2006. *Habermas and Theology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H324 A62 2006]
- Adorno, Theodor W. and Max Horkheimer. 2002. *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*. Trans Edmund Jephcott. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3279 .H8473 P513 2002]
- Benhabib, Seyla. 1986. *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.3 .B46 1986]
- Bloch, Ernst. 1972. *Atheism in Christianity: The Religion of the Exodus and the Kingdom*. Trans. J.T. Swann. New York: Herder and Herder. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR128 .A8 B5513]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. *The Spirit of Utopia*. Trans Anthony A. Nassar. Stanford: Stanford University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3209 .B753 G4213 2000]
- Borradori, Giovanna. 2003. *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HV6432.7 .H32 2003]
- Buck-Morss, Susan. 2003. *Thinking Past Terror: Islamism and Critical Theory on the Left*. London: Verso. [Robarts Library: HN40 .M6 B83 2003]
- Chambers, Simone. 2004. The Politics of Critical Theory. In Rush, Fred, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory* (pp. 219-247) Cambridge, U.K. ; New York : Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.2 .C34 2004]
- Cooke, Maeve. 1994. *Language and Reason: A Study of Habermas' Pragmatics*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H324 C66 1994]
- De Vries, Hent. 2005. *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR121.2 .V713 2005]
- Fraser, Nancy. 1989. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM24 .F732 1989]

- Geuss, Raymond. 2005. *Outside Ethics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. [Robarts Library: BJ1031 .G48 2005X]
- Habermas, Jürgen. 1971. *Knowledge and Human Interests*. Boston: Beacon. [Robarts Library: BD163 .H2213 1971]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1973. Dogmatism, Reason, and Decision: On Theory and Praxis in our Scientific Civilization. In *Theory and Practice*. Boston: Beacon. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM33 .H313]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One. Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM24 .H3313 v.1]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two. Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Trans. Thomas McCarthy. Boston: Beacon. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM24 .H3313 v.2]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987. *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* Trans. Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H323 P5513 1987]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *Postmetaphysical Thinking: Philosophical Essays*. Trans William Mark Hohengarten. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H323 N3313 1992]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1992. *Autonomy and Solidarity: Interviews with Jürgen Habermas*. Ed. Peter Dews. London: Verso. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H324 A5 1992]
- Honneth, Axel. 2004. A Social Pathology of Reason: On the Intellectual Legacy of Critical Theory. In *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Ed. Fred Rush. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 336-360. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.2 .C34 2004]
- Huhn, Tom, ed. 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3199 .A34 C36 2004]
- Jacobson, Eric. 2003. *Metaphysics of the Profane: The Political Theology of Walter Benjamin and Gershom Scholem*. New York: Columbia University Press. [Robarts Library: B3209 .B584 J33 2003X]
- Jay, Martin. 1973. *The Dialectical Imagination*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Co. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: H62 .J37]
- Kaplan, David. 2003. *Ricoeur's Critical Theory*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B2430 .R554 K37 2003]
- Kohlenbach, Margarete and Raymond Geuss, eds. 2005. *The Early Frankfurt School and Religion*. Basingstoke UK: Palgrave MacMillan. [Robarts Library: BL51 .E27 2005]
- Kuipers, Ronald. 2002. Religion and Critical Rationality. In *Critical Faith: Toward a Renewed Understanding of Religious Life and its Public Accountability*. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 227-290. [Robarts Library: BT50 .K84 2002]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. Reconciling a Shattered Modernity: Habermas on the Enduring Relevance of the Judeo-Christian Ethical Tradition. In *Faith in the Enlightenment: The critique of the Enlightenment revisited?* Ed. Hendrik M. Vroom. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi, 120-140. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B802 .F35 2006]
- Lalonde, Marc P. 1997. On the Moral-Existential Facet of Religious Studies Today. In *Studies in Religion/ Sciences Religieuses* 26/1: 25-43. [Trinity College Library: PER]

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1999. *Critical Theory and the Challenge of Jürgen Habermas: Toward a Critical Theory of Religious Insight*. New York: Peter Lang. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H324 L35 1999]
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One Dimensional Man*. Boston: Beacon Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM101 .M268]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. *Towards a Critical Theory of Society: Collected Papers II*. Ed. D. Kellner. London: Routledge. [Robarts Library: HM585 .M36 2001]
- Martinson, Mattias. 2000. *Perseverance without Doctrine: Adorno, Self-Critique, and the Ends of Academic Theology*. New York: Peter Lang. [Robarts Library: BT40 .M37 2000X]
- Meehan, Johanna, ed. 1995. *Feminists Read Habermas: Gendering the Subject of Discourse*. New York: Routledge. [Robarts Library: HQ1190 .F464 1995X]
- Metz, Johann-Baptist and Jürgen Moltmann. 1995. *Faith and the Future: Essays on Theology, Solidarity, and Modernity*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BR50 .M426 1995]
- Ott, Michael R. 2001. *Max Horkheimer's Critical Theory of Religion : The Meaning of Religion In The Struggle For Human Emancipation*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3279.H8474 O88 2001]
- Plate, S. Brent. 2005. *Walter Benjamin, Religion, and Aesthetics: Rethinking Religion through the Arts*. London: Routledge. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3209 .B584 P53 2005]
- Rush, Fred. 2004. Conceptual Foundations of Early Critical Theory. In *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Ed. Fred Rush. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 6-39. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.2 .C34 2004]
- Rush, Fred, ed. 2004. *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B809.2 .C34 2004]
- Siebert, Rudolf J. 1979. *Horkheimer's Critical Sociology of Religion: The Relative and Transcendent*. Washington, DC: University Press of America. [Regis College Library: B3279 .H8474 S52]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1985. *The Critical Theory of Religion: The Frankfurt School*. New York: Mouton. [Robarts Library: BL51 .S543 1985]
- White, Stephen K., ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Habermas*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3258 .H324 C36 1995]
- Wiggershaus, Rolf. 1994. *The Frankfurt School: Its History, Theories, and Political Significance*. Trans. Michael Robertson. Cambridge, MA: MIT. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: HM24 .W55 1995]
- Zuidervaart, Lambert. 1991. *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3199 .A33 A438]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: BH301.T77 Z85 2004]
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2007. *Social Philosophy after Adorno*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press [ICS Library Reserve Shelf: B3199 .A34 Z84 2007]