Readings in Social Theory:
Consciousness and Resistance

A Note on Course Description, Objectives, and Organization:
This course surveys critical social and cultural theory from classical Marxism to the Zapatistas. It is organized as an introduction to Marxist historiography, with an eye to themes, concepts, and questions of consciousness, ideology, and resistance. In addition to familiarizing ourselves with the works of a wide range of theorists and the way these thinkers have been critiqued through feminist, race and ethnic, historical, and “post” debates, we will consider how the shifting and ever growing historiography of social and cultural theory might help each of us in the designing and framing of our own on-going research projects. Ultimately, this course requires that we engage and analyze the ways theorists and the people they write about both imagine and practice social change in order to learn about the past, make sense of the present, and envision the future.

Classroom Culture:
This course is designed to incorporate your participation and ideas as an important part of every class meeting. Since we will often engage difficult and controversial issues it will be our collective responsibility to make sure that our classroom interaction is respectful and supportive of the views, experiences, and expertise of others at all times. If you expect people to listen to your ideas, in other words, you have to show respect for their ideas. To create a classroom culture of courtesy, collegiality, and cooperation, let us remember that we know more together than any one of us knows individually.

Course Assignments and Grading:
You are expected to carefully read the assigned material, attend all classes and arrive on time, be prepared to participate in seminar discussions and activities, and complete all written assignments. You are required to complete all of the following assignments.

1.) Weekly thought pieces, 30% of final grade. Each week you are required to prepare a 2-3 page thought piece on the week’s readings. These are not meant to be summaries of the weekly readings. They are instead a space for you to critically engage the week’s readings by exploring the readings main concepts and debates, devising questions to share in the seminar discussion, and/or considering the implications of the readings for other texts we have read, your own research, or larger fields of study. Your thought pieces will be assessed weekly by another class participant for comment and reaction, so they should be typed and proofread carefully.
3.) Essays, 40% of final grade. You will prepare two 10-12 page essays over the course of the quarter. They are due in class during Week 6 and Finals Week. These essays should address a concept, debate, or question from the previous 5 weeks readings and class discussions. One formula for these essays is to 1) identify your central concept/debate/question 2) discuss how the readings investigate this concept/debate/question 3) explore your own critiques/perspectives 4) consider how your concept/debate/question might be useful for further developing your own research interests.

4.) Class Facilitation and Participation, 30% of final grade. You are responsible for facilitating at least one class session, including consulting with the professor beforehand, designing a lesson plan, providing a class outline and discussion questions, and moderating the class conversation.

All written work must be typed, double-spaced, and in 12 point font. All assignments must include your name, the course, title of the paper, and the date. All papers are due at the beginning of class on the due date. No late papers or email submissions will be accepted. Your written work must be your own and you are expected to conform to the university’s academic honesty code for all assignments.

Course Outline:
Week Zero, October 2: Course Introduction
Introductions, review of syllabus, and brief discussion of “theory, consciousness, and resistance” and expectations for seminar.

Week 1, October 9: Marx and Ideology

Week 2, October 16: Gramsci and Hegemony
Week 3, October 23: Foucault and Power

Week 4, October 30: Cultural Studies and Identity

Week 5, November 6: History and the Cultural Turn

Week 6, November 13: The Post Debates
Week 7, November 20: Critical Gender and Radical Feminism

Week 8: Thanksgiving Holiday. No Class!

Week 9: December 4, Zapatismo

Week 10: December 11, Consciousness and Resistance in the University