

Critical Historical Studies is an attempt by current and former members of the University of Chicago's Social Theory Workshop to confront what we see as a looming methodological crisis in the social sciences. We note that the predominantly cultural approaches to social life that have been in vogue in the historical social sciences in recent decades have proven incapable of grasping the large-scale transformations that social life has repeatedly undergone in the modern era—not least the economic and political crisis touched off in 2008. Discussions in the Social Theory Workshop have, over the years, developed the contours of an approach that strives to overcome both the idealistic tendencies of cultural historical studies and the opposite deterministic and reductionist propensities of social historical studies. This general approach carries on the tradition of critical theory and provides a supra-disciplinary perspective that grasps social and cultural questions as historically constituted. By bringing together scholars from a variety of fields, but with a common commitment to combining empirical research and theoretical insight, the conference aims to facilitate a methodologically-oriented exchange with agenda-setting goals.

This conference has been generously co-sponsored by: the Franke Institute for Humanities, the Department of History, the College of the University of Chicago, the France Chicago Center, the Department of Anthropology, CIS Norman Wait Harris Fund, the Department of Political Science, and SSD.

Critical Historical Studies is sponsored by the History, Social Theory and Capitalism Project at 3CT. For more information on this project, please visit our website:

<http://ccct.uchicago.edu/projects/history-social-theory-and-capitalism-1/>

For more information on the Social Theory Workshop, please visit:

<http://cas.uchicago.edu/workshops/socialtheory/>



criticalhistoricalstudies
in **The Franke Institute for Humanities**
1100 East 57th Street, JRL S-118
Dec 2-4, 2011

Presented by:

The Social Theory Workshop

and

The Chicago Center for Contemporary Theory (3CT)

Friday DECEMBER 2, 2011

8:30–9:00am **BREAKFAST**

9:00–9:30am **OPENING REMARKS**

10:00–12:00pm **PANEL 1: CRITICAL HISTORY AND CULTURE**

JOHN ABROMEIT Department of History and Social Studies, SUNY Buffalo State

“Horkheimer and Adorno’s materialist concept of culture and its relevance to contemporary debates in historical methodology”

SEAN FORNER Department of History, Michigan State University
“Kultur as refuge, Kultur as resource: Re-articulating culture and politics in Germany after 1945”

CHRISTIAN UHL Department for South and East Asian Languages and Cultures, Ghent University

“Translation and time: A reminder of the curvature of the poststructuralist plain”

12:00–1:30pm **LUNCH**

1:30–3:30pm **PANEL 2: LAW, POLITICS, AND CRITICAL HISTORY**

STACIE HANNEMAN Department of History, University of Chicago
“Treaty port China: Forging a global logic of governance”

ROBERT STERN Department of History, University of Chicago
“Sovereign equality, commodity exchange, and the juridical order of the earth: Towards a new critical jurisprudence of modern international law”

DEVIN PENDAS Department of History, Boston College
“Critical legal studies and critical historical studies: Convergences and divergences”

3:30–4:00pm **BREAK**

4:00–6:00pm **PANEL 3: HISTORICAL CONFIGURATIONS AND POLITICS**

PAOLA CASTANO Department of Sociology, University of Chicago
“Perspectives for a critical epistemology of violence”

ANDREW SLOIN Department of History, Earlham College
“The politics of crisis: Economy, ethnicity, and Trotskyism in Belorussia”

JAKE WERNER Department of History, University of Chicago
“Global fordism in 1950s urban China”

BERNARD DUBBELD Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, University of Stellenbosch
“The limits of equality as progressive cause: Political unionism and contingent labor in Durban harbor, 1977–1987”

Saturday DECEMBER 3, 2011

8:30–9:00am **BREAKFAST**

9:00–10:45am **PANEL 4: CRITICAL INQUIRIES OF SUBJECTIVITY**

EIICHI NOJIRI Waseda University
“Negativity, history, and the organic composition of capital—Toward a principle theory of transformation of subjectivity”

VIREN MURTHY Department of History, University of Ottawa
“Umemoto Katsumi, subjectivity and the global crisis of Humanism”

MARK JAMES Horlivka State Pedagogical Institution of Foreign Languages
“The mis-education of Arnold Coypel”

10:45–11:00am **BREAK**

11:00–1:00pm **PANEL 5: THE SPATIAL DIMENSION**

PARKER EVERETT Department of History, University of Chicago
“Berlin and critical urban theory”

NIKHIL RAO Department of History, Wellesley College
“Towards greater Bombay: Town planning and the politics of urban growth, 1915–1964”

JO GULDI Society of Fellows, Harvard University
“The long spatial turn: Tenant right, land reform, and food sovereignty, 1861–2011”

SUDHIR VENKATESH Department of Sociology, Columbia University
“Notes toward an understanding of everyday justice in urban communities”

1:00–2:30pm **LUNCH**

2:30–4:30pm **PANEL 6: CRITICAL HISTORY AND REAL ABSTRACTION**

ISTVAN ADORJAN Department of Sociology, University of Chicago
“Imagining finance: The fetish of concrete abstraction”

DAVID BHOLAT Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago
“Analysis, abstraction, and the opacity of the observable: On the anthropology of finance”

HADAS WEISS Goethe University
“Contemporary possibilities of social significance: Anthropology of credit, value and surplus”

OLGA SEZNEVA & SEBASTIAN CHAUVIN Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Amsterdam
“Value, intellect, and the obsolescence of commodity”

4:30–5:00pm **BREAK**

5:00–7:00pm **PANEL 7: CRITICAL INTELLECTUAL HISTORY**

FABIAN ARZUAGA Department of Political Science, University of Chicago
“Machiavelli: Towards a social theoretical approach to the history of political thought”

BO-MI CHOI Committee on Degrees in Social Studies, Harvard University
“The melancholy art of transfiguration: Approaches to a critical history in Adorno and Benjamin”

CHRIS CUTRONE Committee on the History of Culture, University of Chicago
“Beyond history? Historical specificity, the temporality of capital, and Nietzsche, Benjamin and Adorno on the supra-historical”

G. S. SAHOTA Literature Department, UC Santa Cruz
“Atmospherics of imperialism: Benjamin’s sublime”

Sunday DECEMBER 4, 2011

9:00–9:30am **BREAKFAST**

9:30–11:30am **PANEL 8: POLITICAL ECONOMY AND ITS CRITIQUE**

SPENCER LEONARD Society of Fellows, University of Chicago
“Liberalism in extremis: Adam Smith, Karl Marx, and the transition to Capital”

ANDREW SARTORI Department of History, New York University
“From Locke’s theory of property to the problem of primitive accumulation in Marx’s Capital”

MARK LOEFFLER Society of Fellows, University of Chicago
“On the genealogy of Keynesianism”

JOSEPH LOUGH International and Area Studies Academic Program, UC Berkeley
“The Chicago School: A critical historical retrospective, 1891–present”

11:30–11:45am **BREAK**

11:45–1:00pm **CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PLENARY: TOWARDS CRITICAL HISTORICAL STUDIES**

PARKER EVERETT Department of History, University of Chicago

THOMAS DODMAN Department of History and Art History, George Mason University

MOISHE POSTONE Department of History, University of Chicago

WILLIAM SEWELL Department of Political Science, University of Chicago