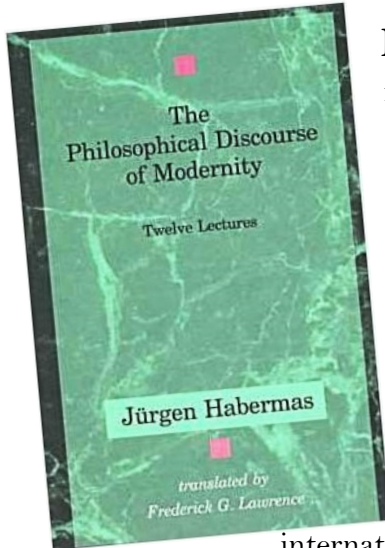


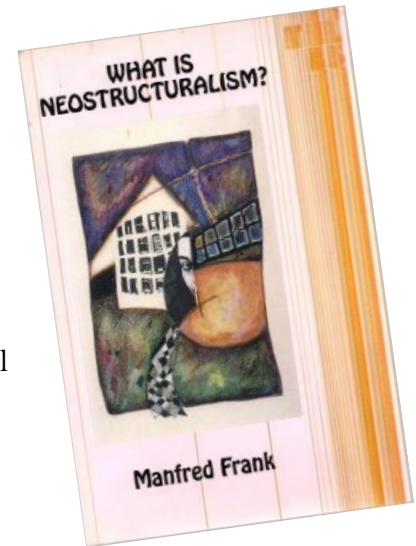
Modernity and Postmodernity in Jürgen Habermas and Manfred Frank

Holub | 3 credit units | M 12:30—3:18 | Autumn Semester 2014



Perhaps the two most important theoretical books to appear in the mid-1980s, and two of the most important theoretical reflections of the postwar era, were the large volumes by Jürgen Habermas on the *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1985) and Manfred Frank's *What Is Neostructuralism?* (1984). Both books were originally lecture series delivered at Frankfurt and Tübingen, respectively. The authors are two of the foremost intellectuals in postwar Germany, both of whom are philosophers with broad interests and

international reputations. In this seminar we will be looking at these two books as our primary texts and examining the questions: what is modernity? and what is postmodernity?



We will deal with Habermas first, since his survey of modernity allows us to reflect on German philosophy from the period of German Idealism (Kant, Hegel) through twentieth century philosophers like Heidegger. Frank's topic is in some respects more limited, since it deals in his first chapters with structuralism (Saussure), and then with what he calls "neostructuralism," but which we usually refer to as "poststructuralism." Frank's central focus are poststructuralist thinkers: Foucault, Derrida, Lacan, and Deleuze. Some of his reflections therefore take up topics also found in Habermas's book (Foucault, Derrida), although Frank's treatment is more exhaustive.

Although the two books will be the major texts everyone will read, we will also look at works by some of the theorists they discuss as supplementary material. We will therefore gain insight into central figures in German intellectual history, as well as into seminal figures in discussions in the humanities from the French tradition. We will gain insight into Habermas's project and Frank's philosophical outlook, but we hope to simultaneously learn something about the traditions on which they focus in their books.

The texts by Habermas and Frank are available in both German and English. Supplementary texts will also be chosen so that they are accessible to readers in the original language (German and French) or in English translation.