I. Neo- Marxism: Critical Theory (CT)

A. Frankfurt School: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse

B. Major works

1. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: Horkheimer and Adorno

1. *One Dimensional Man*: Marcuse

C. New focus

1. Marx’s focus

a. economy: mode of production

b. base-superstructure

c. ideas are ideas of ruling class= false consciousness

d. alienation from product of labor=fetishization of the commodity

2. Critical theory

a. culture and domination: culture industry

b. one dimensionality: loss of critical thinking

i. inability to overcome false consciousness

ii. inability to understand alienation and commodification

iii. inability to see other possibilities

3. culture industry: mass media

a. most important institution of social control

b. most important institution of socialization

c. metaphor: “The Allegory of the Cave”

D. The Cave

1. People are inside a cave and they are facing the

far wall

2. "Prisoners" whose legs and necks fastened so

a. they can only look at the far wall

b. can't see each other

c. since childhood

3. there is a fire behind them and a raised road upon

which people with objects travel

4. all the prisoners can see are the reflections

5. this is the only world they know

a. a shadow world

b. world of reflections

6. prisoners believe that this is reality

7. experts of the cave

E. “Enlightenment”

1. outside: image of sun is image of truth

2. what if: someone turns toward fire and sees whole cave

a. psychologically "at a loss"

b. shadows truer

3. needs to be dragged out

a. dazzled by the glare

b. takes awhile but finally "sees" the truth

4. chooses to return

a. hard to see in dark now

b. appears like a fool trying to explain the truth

c. threatened by death because he has upset their

"taken for granted" lives

F. Meaning of the metaphor - Plato

1. society controls the individual by creating

a. a false or shadow reality - images, illusions,

ideology

b. creating a dependent psychology, oriented to that reality

c. social structures and arrangements

i. institutions

ii. arrangements - social roles

iii. norms, values, rituals

d. existing power arrangements and the status

quo never questioned

2. individual

a. thinks he is free and knows something because he hasn't experienced anything else

b. organizes life, goals, needs around false reality

G. Modern Cave

1. culture industry: mass media and images on the wall

2. domination through the social construction of subjectivity

a. individual lives organized around consumption

b. cultural environment: reinforces consuming as norm and value

1. advertising: social construction of consumers

d. unable to think of other possibilities

H. Consumerism and the social construction of “one dimensionality”

1. Advertising

a. main means of constructing consumers

i. art of creating needs

ii. organized construction of discontent

b. create a reality/world view:

i. comodification of everything

ii. world is place to consume

iii. world is to be consumed

b. create a consumer psyche: a “buying being”

i. “I buy, therefore I am.”

ii. “ I must keep buying to keep being”

iii. social role: consumer, norm: consumption

2. Early advertising

a. extent

b. assumptions

c. means

3. Social change: modernization

a. urbanization

b. industrialization: Fordism,

c. national markets

4. new ideas

a. Freud and the id

b. Le Bon and collective behavior

5. practice: WWI and success of propaganda

a. Committee on Public Information (The Creel Commission)

b. goal: change public opinion on war

c. means: mass media and advertising

d. success: We realized we could sell anything. Worlds greatest adventure in advertising

6. 1920s Birth of consumerism

a. goal: mass production of consumers

b. assumptions: appeal to unconscious, emotions

c. means: Gospel of Mass Consumption 1920s

i. radio

ii. higher wages

iii. installment

iv. change definition of the word “consumption”

v. branding, packaging, catchy phrase, product placement

vi. soap operas

3. 1950s: Consumerism as the American Dream

a. technological development: television

b. social forces: economic boom/disposable income

c. Consuming the American dream

i. house, family

ii. consumer goods

iii. keeping up with the Joneses = success

iv. consuming and freedom: fighting communism

v. public space: shopping mall

d. advertising

i. television as the dream machine

ii. reference group: middle class.

iii. GM and cars: dynamic and planned

obsolescence, stratification

iv. product and value: Marlboro

4. Consumer Society: Present

a. Saturation of cultural space

b. $ spent: $300 billion

c. Ideology: definition of freedom

d. Success: consumered consciousness

i. always have something in mind

ii. wish list

iii. dreaming

iv. anxious, unhappy, unfulfilled (“organized creation of discontent”)

v. reference group

5. Consequences

a. critical thinking: consumerism as false consciousness

b. critical thinking: is another world possible, desirable.