I. Neo- Marxism: Critical Theory

A. Theorists: Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Jurgen Habermas

B. Major works

1. *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno

*2. One Dimensional Man*: Herbert Marcuse

3. *Escape from Freedom*: Erich Fromm

4. *Theory of Communicative Action*: Jürgen Habermas

C. Main question: how did Enlightenment turn into dystopian social formation of Western society?

1. Fascism

2. Communist totalitarianism

3. WWII

4. Genocide

5. Consumer culture

D. Theoretical Influences

1. Marx

a. analysis of economy

b. inadequacy

i. fascism

ii. welfare state

iii. cooptation of the working class

iv. consumerism

v. wealthfare state

vi. culture industry

2. Hegel

a. dialectical imagination

b. reason as critique

i. truth through negation

ii. power to demystify or see through illusion and falsehood

3. Lukacs

a. reification

b. commodification of everything

4. Nietzsche

a. critique of science

b. knowledge and human interests

c. scientific knowledge and will to self-preservation

d. scientific knowledge is not truth

e. human beings create truth out of needs: self-preservation, meaning, beauty

f. fail to see world as that which they have created

g. conform to world

5. Weber

a. bureaucratization

b. rationalization

6. Freud

a. reality principle

b. pleasure principle

E. Marx and domination

1. Marx’s assumptions

a. economy is system of exploitation by one class over another

b. economic exploitation =is system of domination

2. Marx’s analysis

a. understanding economy is way to understand society (social formation)

b. base (mode of production + relations of production) determines social formation

c. superstructure: political, legal, ideological, education

i. shaped by base

ii. reflects inequality of base

iii. contributes to system of domination

F. Critical theory (1920s to present)

1. society as a system of domination

2. domination is more fundamental: human beings relation to natural world

3. domination begins with “primitive fear of nature”

a. leads to drive to dominate nature (Nietzsche)

b. magic to religion to science as power over nature

c. but power over nature includes human beings

d. domination becomes total

4. total domination: dystopia

a. economy and domination

i. coopted workers

ii. state subsidized capitalism

iii. free market theory as ideological justification

b. culture as domination: culture industry

i. commodification of reality

ii. production of consumers

iii. organized creation of discontent

iv. standardized and unending desires

v. standardized never ending cultural products

vi. elimination of culture as subversive

c. technology as domination

i. Frankenstein

ii. automation as domination of worker

iii. automobile, computers, cell phones, cameras as domination

d. social organization as domination: Weber

i. bureaucracy

ii. dehumanization

5. Consequences

a. one dimensionality: loss of critical thinking (Hegel)

i. inability to demystify dominant ideology

ii. subversion of rational autonomous subjectivity

iii. inability to see other possibilities (Lukacs)

b. no possibility of historical change