



Course Information

Prefix & number	Title
EDST 601A	First-Year Doctoral Seminar in Critical Social Theory
Instructor	Prerequisites or restrictions (if any)
Claudia Ruitenber	Required for PhD students in EDST; open to doctoral students in any other program in the humanities and social sciences

Focus and Purposes

The seminar interprets “critical social theory” broadly and includes social, political, and cultural theory. The focus is on what theory is and does in educational research. The three main purposes of the seminar are:

- to enable you to gain a better understanding of the relation between concepts, theories, and paradigms;
- to enable you to develop a broader understanding of critical social, political, and cultural theory in general, including theories you are unlikely to use in your own research;
- to enable you to gain greater insight into particular concepts, theories, and paradigms that may be helpful for your own research.

This is a seminar with likely a small number of students, so active engagement by all is essential. We will be reading, writing, questioning, and speaking together. In addition to the three main purposes listed above, the seminar is also a place to practice academic reading and writing, including asking good questions and providing thoughtful responses.

Themes

The seminar will be structured around four themes:

- concepts
- theories
- paradigms
- genealogies of ideas

In addition to studying general texts about the themes above, we will discuss two examples that illustrate how concepts, theories, paradigms are related, how they show up in educational scholarship, and how tracing the genealogy of a concept can be helpful. The first revolves around the concept of “performativity,” taking the work of Judith Butler as a point of departure; the second revolves around the concept of “resentment,” taking the work of Glen Coulthard as a point of departure.

Assignments or Assessment Process

The seminar is assessed on a pass/fail basis. You will receive formative, qualitative feedback on the assignments in the seminar; no grades will be given.