

**Doctor in Educational Leadership and Management Development
National Chung Cheng University**

395801201

Seminar on Critical Theory in Educational Research

Semester II 2025/2026

Tues/Time: 0910-1200

Venue: R335, Education Bld 2

Instructor:

Prof. KOH Aaron

Office: R535

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Course Description

This doctoral course introduces students to major critical and decolonial theories in educational research through close engagement with key thinkers including Chen Kuan-Hsing, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, Paulo Freire, Antonio Gramsci, Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey, and contemporary decolonial scholarship. Students will examine how power and knowledge shape education, and how concepts such as capital, hegemony, identity, space, and social justice can be used as analytical tools rather than abstract ideas. The course emphasises “thinking with theory” for doctoral work. Students will learn to read theoretical texts with precision, trace intellectual debates, and translate concepts into researchable questions, frameworks, and methodological choices. Throughout the course, students will apply theory to their own dissertation topics, interrogate dominant narratives, and develop reflexive and ethically grounded approaches that take seriously history, politics, and marginalised voices. By the end, students will be able to craft a coherent theoretical stance and use it to produce stronger, more original educational research.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a clear understanding of major critical and decolonial theories in educational research by accurately explaining key concepts, arguments, and debates across the course readings.
- Critically analyse educational issues using theory, showing how power, knowledge, capital, identity, space, and social justice operate within specific policies, institutions, and practices.
- Develop and justify a coherent theoretical stance for doctoral research, including clear reasons for selecting particular theorists and concepts and acknowledging their limits.

- Translate theoretical concepts into an actionable research design by formulating theory driven research questions, defining key constructs, and identifying what would count as evidence in empirical work.
- Produce theoretically informed scholarly writing that synthesises literature, advances an argument, and demonstrates reflexivity about positionality, ethics, and the politics of knowledge production.

Course Schedule:

Week	Date	Topic
1	24 Feb	Using Critical Theory in Research: The why and how
2	3 Mar	Asia as Method
3	10 Mar	Southern Theory
4	17 Mar	On Decoloniality
5	24 Mar	A defiant research imagination
6	31 Mar	Foucault I: Discourse
7	7 Apr	Foucault II: Power/Knowledge
8	14 Apr	Foucault III: Governmentality
9	21 Apr	Bourdieu I: Forms of Capital
10	28 Apr	Bourdieu II: New developments of his work
11	5 May	Gramsci and Educational Thought: Hegemony
11	12 May	Critical Theory of Space I: The Production of Space
12	19 May	Critical Theory of Space II: Doreen Massey <i>For Space</i>
14	26 May	Critical Theory of Space III: Thinking space relationally and beyond
15	2 Jun	Consolidation, Consultation and Closure
16	9 Jun	Final Term Paper Writing Week

Course Schedule, Topics & Weekly Readings

Wk	Date	Topics	Weekly Readings
1	24 Feb	Using Critical Theory in Research: The why and how	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Rasmussen (2017). "The Role of Theory in Research" b. Jackson & Mazzei (2018). "Thinking with Theory: A New Analytic for Qualitative Inquiry".
2	3 Mar	Asia as Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Chen. K.-H. (2010). <i>Asia as Method</i>. Duke University Press (To read Chapter 1 and 5). b. Zhang H, Chan, P., & Kenway, J. (Eds.)(2015). <i>Asia as Method in Education Studies</i>. Routledge. (To read Introduction and Chapter 5) c. Phan (2023). "Reopening an Asia-Scar".
3	10 Mar	Southern Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Connell, R. (2007). <i>Southern Theory: The Global Dynamics of Knowledge in Social Science</i>. Polity. (To read, Introduction, Chapters 1-3 and 5-8)
4	17 Mar	On Decoloniality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mignolo, W. D. & Walsh, C. B. (2018). <i>On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis</i>. Duke University Press. (To read Chapter 1). b. Reiter, B. (Ed.)(2018). <i>Constructing the Pluriverse: The Geopolitics of Knowledge</i>. Duke University Press. (To read Introduction and Chapter 4). c. Medina & Harding (2025). "Epistemic Decentralizing: Distributed agency in a context of knowledge asymmetries."
5	24 Mar	A defiant research imagination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Kenway & Fahey (Eds.)(2009). <i>Globalizing the Research Imagination</i>. Routledge. (To read Chapter 1). b. Burnard (2022). "Critical Openings in Performing Transdisciplinary Research as/in Rebellion."
6	31 Mar	Foucault I: Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foucault (1972). "Selected readings from The Archaeology of Knowledge". b. Foucault (1981). "The order of discourse". c. Mills (2003). "Discourse". d. Fairclough (1992). "Michel Foucault and the analysis of discourse".

7	7 Apr	Foucault II: Power/Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foucault (1992). "The subject and power". b. Foucault (1977). "Selected readings from Discipline and Punish: The birth of the prison"; "Docile bodies" and "Panopticism". c. Smart (1985). "Subjects of power, objects of knowledge".
8	14 Apr	Foucault: Governmentality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Foucault (1991). "Governmentality". b. Dean, M. (1999). <i>Governmentality: Power and Rule in Modern Society</i>. Sage. (To read Chapter 1).
9	21 Apr	Bourdieu I: Forms of Capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Bourdieu (1986). "The forms of capital" b. Noble & Watkins (2003). "So, how did Bourdieu learn to play tennis? Habitus, consciousness and habituation". c. Reay (2004). "'It's all becoming a habitus': Beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research."
10	28 Apr	Bourdieu II: New developments of his work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Hadas, M. (2022). <i>Outlines of a Theory of Plural Habitus: Bourdieu Revisited</i>. Routledge.
11	5 May	Gramsci and educational thought: Hegemony	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Jones, S. (2006). <i>Antonio Gramsci</i>. Routledge. (To read the entire book. This book is available online in CCU library). b. Boccock (1986). "The concept of hegemony". c. Apple (1990). "On analyzing hegemony".
12	12 May	Critical Theory of Space I: The Production of Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Lefebvre, H. (1993). <i>The Production of Space</i>. Blackwell.
13	19 May	Critical Theory of Space II: Doreen Massey <i>For Space</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Massey, D. (1994). <i>Space, Place, and Gender</i>. University of Minnesota Press. b. Massey, D. (2005). <i>For Space</i>. Sage.
14	26 May	Critical Theory of Space III: Thinking Space Relationally and Beyond.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Robertson (2010). "'Spatializing' the sociology of education: Stand-points, entry-points and vantage-points". b. Jones (2009). "Phase space: geography, relational thinking, and beyond". c. Beech, Larsen & Wei (2025). "Stretching spatial theories in comparative education: new approaches for challenging times".

15	2 Jun	Consolidation, Consultation and Closure
16	9 Jun	Final term paper writing week

Assessment Components

Students are expected to participate in class lectures and small group discussions. The table below is an overview of the components of assessment and percentage.

	Assessment Components	Percentage
1	Individual Class Participation	20%
2	350-500-word Reflection Pieces of one reading each week	30%
3	Final Term Paper	50%

Assessment & Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on students' individual performance in the following three areas:

Assessment 1: Individual Class Participation (20%)

A maximum of 20 marks (20% of your course grade) will be given for course participation, which includes preparation for each class meeting, and contribution to in-class discussions and activities. Thoughtful responses and evidence of having read prescribed readings for each week will be generously rewarded with a good participation mark.

Assessment 2: Reflection Pieces (30%)

You are required to write a 350-500-word reflection for one reading of your choice for each week. **You cannot use any AI tools to write or edit this reflective piece.** Only the best 10 pieces will be counted towards this assessment component. Submit weekly reflection at the beginning of class each week. You may wish to use the following writing prompts:

- Choose one concept and explain what it allows you to see that you could not see before.
- What have this theory pushed you to think differently as a PhD student?
- How would you extend the theory to a different context, place, or population?
- What concept felt personally relevant to your own experiences in education or institutions, and why?
- What is one take-away from the reading and why?

Assessment 3: Final Term Paper (50%)

Write a theoretical chapter for your thesis. Your term paper should read like the theory chapter of your thesis. It should do more than summarise thinkers. It must build a conceptual framework that you will use to analyse your topic. The chapter should show how theory helps you see, explain, and argue something specific about your research problem. A template to guide your writing will be provided close to the assignment deadline.

Deadline for submission of the paper is **26 Jun 2026 (Friday) 2359** . The final paper should not exceed 6,000 words including references.

Please upload your assignment on e-Course, but before uploading **ensure that you have done a plagiarism check using Turn-it-in. You are to declare whether you have used ChatGPT or any AI tools on the declaration sheet and explain how you have utilized these tools for your final term paper.**

Your term paper must be written in good, clear English.

- Format of final paper: MS Word Format in the APA (American Psychological Association) Manual Style, A4-size (Margin: 2.54cm on all sides), Times New Roman (Font size: 12 point), double spaced.
- Please state clearly on the cover of your paper:
 - (1) the course code & title of this course: Critical Theory in Educational Research;
 - (2) the title of your paper and
 - (3) your name and student number.
- ***It is advisable to keep a copy of your final paper for your own record.**

Grade Descriptors

Grade	Mark	Description
A+	96-100	Outstanding: The level of research, thinking, and communication are outstanding.
A	91-95	Very good: The level of research, thinking, and communication are superior. Well done!
A-	86-90	Good: The level of research, thinking, and communication are very good.
B+	81-85	Satisfactory: The level of research, thinking, and communication are satisfactory.
B	76-80	Acceptable but average at best: The level of research, thinking, and communication are acceptable.
B-	71-75	Acceptable but definitely below average: The level of research, thinking, and communication are barely acceptable.
C or below	70 or below	Not acceptable: The work is not appropriate for this class.

Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations.

Every assignment handed in should be accompanied by a signed declaration as below.

I declare that the assignment here submitted is original except for source material explicitly acknowledged, and that the same or related material has not been previously submitted for another course. I also acknowledge that I am aware of University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and of the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations, as contained in the website.

Disclosure of use of AI should be stated on the cover sheet.

Signature

Date

Name

Student ID

Course code

Course title

Suggested Readings:

Adkins, L., Brosnan, C., & Threadgold, S. (Eds.)(2017). *Bourdieuian prospects*. London: Routledge.

Appadurai, A. (1996). *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Apple, M. (1990). *Ideology and curriculum*. New York and London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (2013). *Foucault, power and education*. New York and London: Routledge.

Ball, S. J. (Ed.)(2016). *Michel Foucault and education policy analysis*. London: Routledge.

Bocok, R. (1986). *Hegemony*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications.

Borg, C., Buttigieg, J., & Mayo, P. (Eds.)(2002). *Gramsci and education*. Lanham, New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J.-C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage.

Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic practice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1998). *Practical reason*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Burchell, G., Gordon, C., & Miller, P. (Eds.)(1991). *The Foucault effect: Studies in governmentality*. U.S.: The University of Chicago Press.

Chen, K.-H. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Connell, R. (2007). *Southern theory: The global dynamics of knowledge in social science*.

Malden, MA: Polity.

Coben, D. (1998). *Radical heroes: Gramsci, Freire and the politics of adult education*. New York & London: Garland Publishing.

Dean, M. (1999). *Governmentality: Power and rule in modern society*. London: Sage.

English, F. W. & Bolton, C. L. (2016). *Bourdieu for educators: Policy and practice*. London: Sage.

Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and social change*. Cambridge, MA: Polity

Fairclough, N. (2003). *Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research*. London and New York: Routledge.

Faubion, J. D. (Ed.)(1994). *Michel Foucault: Power*. Penguin Books.

Faubion, J. D. (Ed.)(2014). *Foucault now: Current perspectives in Foucault Studies*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Foucault, M. (1972). *The archaeology of knowledge*. London and New York: Routledge.

Foucault, M. (1972). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. New York, Random House: Vintage Books.

Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. Penguin Books.

Foucault, M. (1994). *The birth of the clinic: An archaeology of medical perception*. Random House, New York: Vintage Books.

Gale, T., & Lingard, B. (Eds.)(2015). Special Issue: Evoking and provoking Bourdieu in educational research. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 45(1).

Gramsci, A. (1988). *Prison letters*. London: Pluto Press.

Grenfell, M. (Ed.)(2008). *Pierre Bourdieu: Key concepts*. London and New York: Routledge.

Gulson, K. N., Clarke, M., Petersen, E. B. (Eds.)(2015). *Education policy and contemporary theory: Implications for research*. London: Routledge.

Howson, R., & Smith, K. (Eds.)(2008). *Hegemony: Studies in consensus and coercion*. New York and London: Routledge.

- Jenkins, R. (1992). *Pierre Bourdieu*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Kenway, J., & Fahey, J. (Eds.)(2008). *Globalizing the research imagination*. London: Routledge.
- Lane, J. F. (2000). *Pierre Bourdieu: A critical introduction*. London: Pluto Press.
- Lingard, B., Taylor, S., & Rawolle, S. (Eds.)(2005). Special Issue: Bourdieu and the study of educational policy. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20(6).
- McHoul, A. & Grace, W. (1993). *A Foucault primer: Discourse, power and the subject*. Washington Square, New York: New York University Press.
- Murphy, M. (Ed.)(2013). *Social theory and education research: Understanding Foucault, Habermas, Bourdieu and Derrida*. London: Routledge.
- Murphy, M. (Ed.)(2016). *Theory as method in research: On Bourdieu, social theory and education*. London: Routledge.
- Mills, S. (2003). *Michel Foucault*. London and New York: Routledge.
- O'Farrell, C. (2005). *Michel Foucault*. London: Sage.
- Ransome, P. (1992). *Antonio Gramsci: A new introduction*. New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Rabinow, P., & Rose, N. (Eds.)(1994). *The essential Foucault: Selections from essential works of Foucault, 1954-1984*. New York and London: The New Press.
- Reed-Danahy, D. (2005). *Locating Bourdieu*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Roman, L. (2015)(Ed.) Special Issue: Stuart Hall, 1932-2014; Educational projects, legacies, futures. *Discourse: studies in the cultural politics of education*, 36(2).
- Shusterman, R. (Ed.)(1999). *Bourdieu: A critical reader*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Smart, B. (1985). *Michel Foucault*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stahl, G., G. M. Mu, Ayling, P., & E. B. Weininger (Eds.)(2024). *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Bourdieu and Educational Research*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Thomson, P. (2017). *Educational leadership and Pierre Bourdieu*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, D. (Ed.)(2011). *Michel Foucault: Key concepts*. London and New York: Routledge.

Zhang, H., Chan, P. W. K., & Kenway, J. (Eds.)(2015). *Asia as method in education: A defiant research imagination*. Abindon, Oxon: Routledge.

Webb, J., Schiato, T., & Danaher, G. (2002). *Understanding Bourdieu*. Crows Nest, NSW: Allen & Unwin.