Cultural Marxism

From RationalWiki

"Cultural Marxism? What the holy hell are you talking about?"

—Any liberal who's been exposed to the term for the first time

The term "cultural Marxism" is most commonly encountered as a snarl word decrying everything right-wingers don't like, alluding to a conspiracy theory involving sinister left-wingers in the cultural and artistic spheres, including the media and academia, supposedly being engaged in a decades-long plot to undermine Western culture. With bonus anti-Semitism.

In legitimate academic circles, the term describes the post-Second World War influence of Marxist thought on cultural studies, notably through the work of the Frankfurt school. Although Marx never wrote at any length about culture (what he deemed "the superstructure"), cultural theorists have often used the lens of class, alongside other factors such as race, gender, and sexuality to understand how culture works to perpetuate social inequality.

Outside of graduate seminars in intellectual history, the term is primarily used by reactionaries to red-bait anyone with progressive tendencies.

The slogan was prefigured in Nazi Germany, where Kulturbolschewismus ("Cultural Bolshevism") was used as a term of political abuse.[1]

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Right-wing usage

In current wingnut usage, the term is a favourite of Pat Buchanan and, to the most dangerous extent, Anders Behring Breivik. It is a Cold Warrior's way of decrying "political correctness" or "multiculturalism."[2][3] It's when capitalism and democracy are still the law of the land, but they don't work exclusively for you anymore.

Despite its widespread popularity among the hard-right, many on the right have thoroughly debunked the
It's become a favorite term of many of the nuttier Gamergaters—demonstrating the movement's attraction of many anti-Semites, white supremacists, and MRAs — to explain why those bitch slut whores won't shut up about sexism in video games. They got their collective jockstraps in a knot when discussions on Wikipedia pre-dating their obsession with the term resulted in the "Cultural Marxism" article on Wikipedia being redirected to the "Conspiracy theory" section of Frankfurt School[wp], restored after appealing to the God-King, no consensus after that, then deletion and redirection back to the conspiracy theory.

The term is odious enough that people wanting to use it now apologise in advance,[8] much as nobody behaving in a blatantly racist manner will accept the label "racist".

**Conspiracy theory**

> It slowly started off by homosexuality becoming acceptable, now it's starting to justify pedophilia, and eventually will lead to accepting bestiality and necrophilia in the future. America, Europe, Australia and the whole world is doomed. Cultural Marxism is the best weapon the Jew has ever used so far, after realizing Communism will not win.

—Insane YouTube commenter on young boy twerking at a gay pride parade (with a few grammar corrections).[9]

The associated conspiracy theory asserts that the Frankfurt School, instead of being the relatively arcane strain of academic criticism that it was, actually was a Marxist plot to destroy the capitalist West from within, supposedly spreading its tentacles throughout academia and indoctrinating students to hate America and freedom. Thus, rock'n'roll, the Sixties counterculture, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, homosexuality[10] modern feminism, and in general all the "decay" in the U.S. and elsewhere since the good old days of the Fifties are literally products of this conspiracy.[11] It's also the work of the Jews.[12][13]

"Political correctness" had become the popular snarl word of choice after a 1991 speech by George H. W. Bush, with ensuing press coverage and a Washington Times op-ed by Laurence Jarvik of the Heritage Foundation decrying "storm troopers" attacking "Western culture."[14]

The first usage of the phrase "cultural Marxism" in the conspiracist sense was by William Lind of the Free Congress Foundation in a July 1998 speech to right-wing group Accuracy in Academia, in which he described "political correctness" and "cultural Marxism" as "totalitarian ideologies" that were turning American campuses into "small ivy-covered North Koreas, where the student or faculty member who dares to cross any of the lines set up by the gender feminist or the homosexual-rights activists, or the local black or Hispanic group, or any of the other sainted 'victims' groups that revolves around, quickly find themselves in judicial trouble." Lind made the term's anti-Semitism clear in a June 2002 speech to a Holocaust denial conference in Washington D.C.,
stating in as many words "these guys were all Jewish."[14]

The conspiracy theory was also pushed around this time by Paul Weyrich’s Free Congress Foundation, who spent the 1990s railing against "political correctness", culminating in the 1999 video tape Political Correctness: The Dirty Little Secret, attacking the Frankfurt School.

Pat Buchanan, at an October 2000 campaign stop in Denver for the Reform Party, accused Native Americans attempting to block a Columbus Day parade of "cultural Marxism" in the Rocky Mountain News.[15][16] In his 2001 book The Death of the West, he described "cultural Marxism" as a "regime to punish dissent and to stigmatize social heresy as the Inquisition punished religious heresy. Its trademark is intolerance."

See also

- Critical legal studies – based on the Frankfurt School, not the conspiracy theory
- Cultural Christian
- Red baiting
- Sexual Bolshevism (yes, really)
- See the Wikipedia article on base and superstructure.

External links


Footnotes

1. ↑ See the Wikipedia articles in German[wp] and English[wp].
3. ↑ Anders Behring Breivik. How It All Began -- Political Correctness is Cultural Marxism (http://www.breiviksmanifesto.com/political-correctness-is-cultural-marxism), in Breivik's Manifesto, 2083: A Declaration of European Independence. (This will probably be analyzed by criminal studies professors for years to come.)
9. ↑ Duffy, Nick. Watch: Little boy twerks at Pride parade and upsets homophobes (http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2015/06


Categories: Bronze-level articles | Communism | Conservative wingnuttery | Conspiracy theories | Political correctness | Anti-Semitism

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Frankfurt School

From RationalWiki

The Frankfurt School is a name given to a group of Marxist researchers associated with the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt am Main.[1] Members of the group developed the concept of "critical theory" (as opposed to traditional theory), which involves applying Marxist theories to social matters in order to - in the words of prominent Frankfurt School member Max Horkheimer - "liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them".[1],[2]

The rise of Hitler in 1933 forced most of the Institute for Social Research's scholars to leave Germany, with many relocating to the USA, and the Frankfurt School became associated with Columbia University until returning to Frankfurt in 1949.[1]

The right-wing snarl word "cultural Marxism" refers to them, though the present usage has very little to do with anything the Frankfurt School did.

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Notable figures

People associated with the Frankfurt School include Georg Lukács[wp] (though he was sometimes one of its strongest critics), Walter Benjamin[wp], Theodor W. Adorno,[wp] Jürgen Habermas[wp] and Herbert Marcuse.[wp]
Criticisms

On Academical Ground

On a general ground, the Critical Theory is often criticized for being overly dichotomistic (There's "us", and there's "them"), disregarding that the "traditional theory" (born, according to Horkheimer, from Descartes' *Discours sur la Méthode*), is far from being a single, collective entity, or a theory, or even, traditional to begin with. There's already a lot of bickering between opposing Social Sciences' schools, without considering the Critics, and one could hardly fit the whole of Western thought on a single tradition. This is solved by most critical theorists, by arguing that everybody else's fits in some (of many, almost one for each author) reinterpretation of Weber's *Ends Oriented Rational Action*. How this happens is not clear, since the School itself never makes a common point, so the "agreed" consensus shift based on the fashion of the time.

There's also the common idea that they, contrary to the rest of human kind, are not tied to historical determination and are therefore objective "outsiders". Likewise, anything not-critical would be working for the sake of domination (since it's historically determined by the dominant thought/dominants), and anything thought by a non-critical, would be an ideological construct for self-domination. Despite this they have so frequently fit in with the fashion of their eras, and their general principles have changed a lot over time and among authors.

On a more hermeneutical level, they are criticized for recurring frequently to vague categories. "Freedom" has to be the most abused and unclear concept used, ranging from more classical interpretations of alienation, to almost anarcho-libertines approaches. Diffuse ends, "liberation", "revolution", "empowering", "communicating", ideas that became pretty mainstream yet didn't bring the expected metaphysical outcomes on the affected subjects - which more often than not ended on a shift of subject and an intestine revision (though political movements from such subjects tended to deny or ignore such revisions if they were given a lesser place on the Grand Scheme). For instance, Marcuse praises students and minorities, whereas previous thinkers praised the working classes, artists, intellectuals, and later ones, such as Habermas, praised certain forms of "behavior". Early figures, as Adorno and Horkheimer assumed more classic ends, to later switch after traumatic events (such as, Nazis). Also the fallacious attacks, since large parts of the argumentation is based on rhetorical ground, with little practical relevance. Experimentation, or contrastation of hypothesis, are totally out of subject, after all, as Horkheimer argues. Empirical methodology, as meant since Descartes, "organizes experience according to the questions brought by the reproduction of life in the current society".[3]

Many classical Marxists, specially from Structural Currents, have been critics of this "bourgeois", idealist, socratical approach to Marxism. Other points touched on by classical Marxists are that Frankfurt theorist took discarded, unedited works by Marx, which were considered outdated or ideological (the main critic of this turn of events was Althusser, who would argue that Marx underwent an "epistemological rupture", going from the ideologically built German idealism, to proper scientific socialism). Another critic is that they jumped to their conclusions about scientific Marxism too fast, without listening to classical Marxists' own revision of the Soviet's Union impasse. This ends on a critic against their eurocentrism, since, in the end, the Critics assumed that Marxism failed because of the present situation of the post-industrial First World, whereas Marxist schemes of class struggle were still persistent in the industrializing Third World. It may be noteworthy though, that Marcuse would acknowledges this, and he would support the Center-Periphery thesis, where his "main subjects" would be students and minorities on countries experiencing "late industrialization".

Other Schools of Social sciences have directed their own critics against them, starting from Nicklas Luhman and Systems Theory, which plainly disregarded them for being "theologists".
Cualitive, interpretativist approaches, which often use similar research methodologies (as Grounded Theory, or structural speech analysis) also criticize them for disregarding the role of individuals in the construction of their daily lives, and their own understanding of their actions, in what's an act of inherent freedom. Otherwise, because Critical Studies gives preeminence to the intellectual superiority of the investigator, "who sees" underlying domination/subversion figures on their subjects' discourse, their studies tend to be hardly falsifiable, the investigator can always interpret it's subject despite himself, whereas an interpretativist would try to ground it's work as much as possible in his informant's own image.

Quantitative, post-positivist thought tends to be alien to their pretensions, in the measure they're hard to prove, hard to apply, and largely impractical. Horkheimer himself concluded on "Critical Theory and Traditional Theory" that they would prove their point the day their predictions came true, a hell of a falsifiability criteria. The Critical School orients many of it's critics against this particular approach, which would have contaminated social sciences with the same reductionist thinking that haunts natural sciences. According to Marcuse, empiricism discredits ideas that could be harmful to Society's status quo, by forcing any idea to prove it's operationalization, therefore killing "Reason's transcendent elements"[4]

Right-wing jabberwocky

See the main article on this topic: Cultural Marxism

The Frankfurt School has often been pointed to by right-leaning pundits as being responsible for a large number of modern social ills, and the terms "Frankfurt School" or "Cultural Marxism" are often used by wingnuts as dog whistles for antisemitic conspiracy theories. In his book The Death of the West Pat Buchanan argues that "the Frankfurt School must be held as a primary suspect and principle accomplice" in the titular catastrophe:[5]

Using Critical Theory, for example, the cultural Marxist repeats and repeats the charge that the West is guilty of genocidal crimes against every civilization and culture it has encountered. Under Critical theory, one repeats and repeats that Western societies are history's greatest repositories of racism, sexism, nativism, xenophobia, homophobia, anti-Semitism, fascism and Nazism. Under Critical Theory, the crimes of the West flow from the character of the West, as shaped by Christianity... Under the impact of Critical Theory, many of the sixties generation, the most privileged in history, convinced themselves that they were living in an intolerable hell.[6]

Buchanan goes on to identify the Frankfurt School as the primary catalyst behind the feminist movement ("Female boxing, women in combat, women Rabbis and Bishops, God as She, Demi Moore's G.I. Jane, Rambo-like Sigourney Weaver comforting a terrified and cringing male soldier in Aliens, and all the films and shows that depict women as tough and aggressive and men as sensitive and vulnerable testify to the success of the Frankfurt School and the feminist revolution it helped to midwife")[7] and sex education for children ("The appearance of sex education in elementary schools in America owes a debt to Lukacs, Reich, and the Frankfurt School").[7]

Footnotes

1. ↑[1.0 1.1 1.2]  http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/217277/Frankfurt-School
7. ↑ 7.0 7.1 Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West*, p. 87.
Loaded language

From RationalWiki
(Redirected from Snarl word)

Not to be confused with Loaded question.

Loaded language is language intended to produce an emotional response in the mind of the audience, in order to directly affect their views on a topic.

The use of loaded language confers certain qualities to a statement that often amount to an emotional appeal. "Liberal", for instance, may be (and often is) used among Conservatives in the United States as an insult, implying that the person so-labeled disregards normal moral standards. The true meaning of such a term often becomes obscured due to the prevalence of the coded meaning.

When the meaning is intentionally obfuscated in order to disparage a particular minority or belief without raising an alarm among those who would be offended by the meaning, it is sometimes called dog whistle politics, after the idea (often not actually true) that the out-group can't hear the meaning in the hidden message behind the words. Whether or not the out-group gets it, the in-group knows exactly what is meant by the code. For example, in certain settings in US politics, claiming to be "tough on crime" might be intended to subtly convey or take advantage of racism. Code words and dog whistle politics often use loaded language to convey their meaning to the in-group.

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In politics

- The "First home buyer's scheme" in Australia might equally well have been called "The house price support scheme" - reflecting the effect of giving free money to home buyers with which to buy homes, which is simply that house prices uptick by precisely that amount.
- The abortion debate invariably evokes emotionally charged language and questionable analogies.
Opponents of abortion describe it as "child murder" or "infanticide", and describe themselves as "pro-life", implying a false dichotomy in which those who do not agree with them are seen as being opposed to life itself. Similarly, the pro-choice side couches its language in terms of freedom in general, a strong element in the American mythos, deflecting as much attention from the specific freedom of abortion as possible.

- "Class warfare" is another one. While one might imagine it as double-sided affair, the reality is much different—meaning, it invokes negative images of filthy, lazy laborers attacking hardworking rich folks. In recent years, especially with the advent of OWS, it's now a cop-out against criticism and tax hikes for the rich. Many conservative pundits use the term to explain the war against the "job creators", not realizing they are invoking arguments penned by Karl Marx every time they do.

- "States' rights" is a loaded term, because it has been used politically to raise race as a wedge issue. While it's occasionally mentioned by libertarians for other reasons, it's still heavily associated with racism elsewhere.

- "Affirmative action" is also a loaded term, and is frequently used to disparage the achievements of non-whites, e.g. Barack Obama being referred to as an Affirmative Action President.

- Of course, everyone's favorite is "family values", which immediately invokes the feelings of warmth, security, honesty and support that a family brings. Even though the term really means a few vicious pet social issues - hatred of gays, being anti-abortion, and restricting roles for women. (See also "traditional values").

- "Job creator" is yet another one, and it has begun to see common usage after the recent recession. It tells people that companies give them employment, often out of the goodness of their hearts. The term is often euphemistically used by Republican politicians in order to fight corporate taxation (mainly because outright praising corporations isn't good PR).

- "Separatist" and "self-determination" evoke negative and positive responses respectively to an independence movement. One suggests "separation", which is linked with relationship difficulties in many people's minds; the other suggests responsibility and fairness. The Chinese government goes one further and uses the term "splittist" for Tibetan nationalists.

- Insurgent, freedom fighter and terrorist can all be applied to the same group depending on the speaker's perspective.

- "Indoctrination" or "brainwashing" in reference to perceived liberal bias in public education and higher education institutions. These words have been used by right wing groups like Eagle Forum, Campus Reform, David Horowitz Freedom Center, etc.

- "Makers and takers": Coined by U.S. Representative and Vice Presidential candidate Paul Ryan during the 2012 election; "takers" describing people who "get more benefits from the federal government than they pay back in taxes."[1] In 2014, Ryan repudiated his choice of words while nonetheless standing by his overall message.[2] Conservatives have often described welfare recipients as thieves or such synonyms. For instance, conservative commentator Charles Sykes has written a book titled A Nation of Moochers: America's Addiction to Getting Something for Nothing. Also, common derogatory terms used to describe poor people, especially recent immigrants, include: parasite, leecher, invader, etc.

- "Urban": Republicans have been really bad at attracting black Americans and speaking on race, so they now have the new strategy of referring to black voters as "urban" voters and then saying the same racist spiel. This gets to hilarious extremes where even Conan O'Brien called Paul Ryan out for being way too obvious about whom he was talking about. [3]

- "Health freedom": In the anti-vaccine arguments, those against vaccines evoke freedom by the right to choose or at least not be forced by government to vaccinate their children due to (unfounded) fears of thiomersal, links to autism, and rare complications from vaccines.
Legislation

- The "Estate Tax," which is only levied on very large bequests, was spun and renamed as the "Death Tax", because the listener would assume it was a tax on anyone who died (well, on their survivors), without realizing it only applies to a very small number of people.
- The phrase "No Child Left Behind" emphasizes the innocence of children, and the feeling of isolation at being left behind, rather than the same program which could have been called "Helping students pass standardized tests succeed in school", the "charter school support act", or simply the "public education reduction act" - reflecting the main effect of the legislation, which is to penalize and ultimately close schools in poor districts owing to the infamous practice in the USA of financing schools via local property taxes.
- The "Defense of Marriage Act" intentionally invokes the image that marriage is being attacked, rather than a more straightforward name like "The Marriage for Heterosexual Couples Only For Federal and Interstate Purposes[4] Act".
- The "USA PATRIOT Act" is a (brutally forced) acronym for *Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act*, but due to the title, it implies that those opposed to the Act are inherently unpatriotic.
  - The above case is so galling that President Bush of all people wrote in his memoir *Decision Points* that he regretted the act's name.

Neologisms

Nobody is sure exactly what it is, but whatever it is, it sounds bad and needs to be banned.

- "Partial-birth abortion" - politicians seem to know more about what this term means than the doctors that perform it.
- "Assault weapon" - scary black guns, which may or may not be related to assault rifles.

Snarl words

A snarl word is a derogatory label that can be attached to something, in order to dismiss its importance or worth, without guilt. When used as snarl words, these words are essentially meaningless; most of them can be used with meaning, but rarely are.

While not actually using the word, liberal comedian/pundit/U.S. Senator Al Franken went into great detail about the "Vast Right-Wing Conspiracy"'s use of snarl words and other forms of emotional appeal in his first political work, *Rush Limbaugh Is A Big Fat Idiot*, specifically referencing Newt Gingrich, Frank Luntz, and Lee Atwater's political activities and conservative pressure groups' reliance on such tactics to slam through the 1994 Contract With America program.

Words frequently perceived and/or used as snarl words include:

- Astroturfer
- Atheist
- Bigot
- Bourgeois
- Brogressive
- Capitalist
- Censorship
- Christophobia
- Collectivist
- Communist
- Conservative
- Corporate
- Creatard
- Cult
- Cultural Marxist
- Darwinism
- Deceiver
Democrat
Denialist
Elitist
Entitlement
Evangelical
Evotard
Fascist[5]
Feminazi
Frankenfood
Fundy
Gay agenda
Ghetto
Greenie
Gun-grabber
Heterophobia
Homofascism[6]
Illegal alien
Imperialist
Indoctrination
Infidel
Islamist
Islamo-Fascist
Islamophobia
Jihadist
Jew
Leftist
Liberal
Marxist
Men's rights activist
Misandrist
Misogynist
Modern feminism
Moonbat
Moral Relativist
Nazi
Neocon
Neoliberal
New Age
Nihilism
Plutocrat
Politically Correct
Privilege
Professional victim
Progressive
Pseudoscience
Racist
Radical feminist
Republican
Reverse racist
Right-winger
Ruling class
Satanist
Scientism
Secular humanist
Sheeple
Shill
SJW / Social justice warrior
Socialist
Statist
Teabagger
Theocrat
Thug
Troll
Urban
Warmist
Welfare queen or related terms like moocher, taker, leaner or dependency on government
White knight
Wingnut
Woo
Zionist

Glittering generalities

A glittering generality, sometimes called a "virtue word" or "purr word," is the opposite of a snarl word. It's a vague term meant to invoke warm fuzzy feelings as in some of the examples given above. (Who could be against the children?) Some common glittering generalities:

American values
Children
Constitutionalist
Democratic
Enlightened
Equalist / Egalitarian
Ethical
Family values
Fairness, or "fair share"
Free speech
Freedom or liberty
Hard-working
Human rights
Job creators
Justice
Liberation
Middle class
Modern
Moral or morals
Natural
Natural marriage
Open-minded
Patriot or patriotic
Principle
Progress
Prosperity
Purity
Real music
Reform
Social justice
Sound money
State-of-the-art
Support the 2nd Amendment
Sustainable
The people, or the will of the people.
Traditional values
True or truth
Tolerance
Veterans
Virtue
Working families
See also

- Appeal to emotion
- Hate speech
- Inflammatory language
- Poisoning the well
- Push poll
- Leading question

Footnotes


3. ↑ http://teamcoco.com/jokes/nov-13-2013-yesterday-paul-ryan-said-president-obama-was-re-elected

4. ↑ The act itself did not prohibit individual states from legalizing same-sex marriage, to be fair. That, and making recognition of same-sex marriage from other states optional.

5. ↑ Famously deconstructed in this 1944 essay (http://www.orwell.ru/library/articles/As_I_Please/english/efasc) by George Orwell.