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## The Society for Critical Exchange, Inc. Founded 1975; incorporated 1976

Guilford House Case Western Reserve University Cleveland, OH 44106 216-368-3342

Fax: 216-368-2216 (call ahead before sending)
Internet: xx1240po.cwru.edu Bitnet: xx124%po.cwru.edu@cunyvm

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Lisa Maruca, English, Case Western Reserve University

## Letter from Cleveland



Now is the time for many of you to renew your memberships, which run for the calendar year. Check the address label to see if your membership is current. If not, please return the form on the inside back cover, along with your 1991 dues.

As you can see from the following pages, the next few

months will be especially busy ones for the SCE. But do not conclude from the activity that there is no room for new projects. If anything, the opposite is the case. The times at which several projects reach fruition are precisely the times we nervously scan the horizon for work that can begin next year and the year after.

We are also or especially looking for advice on a more public matter. From somewhat different political perspectives, the two of us have been increasingly dismayed at the campaign against so-called Political Correctness. From Dinesh D'Souza to Newsweek (not as much a leap as it used to bel) to the Barbeque President, PC-ness has become a convenient, effective shibboleth for the New Right. Literary theory has been a central target in this campaign, of course, though we fear the visibility owes more to our vulnerability than the effectiveness of our teaching and research.

In any case, theory has been the subject of some astonishing misrepresentations. All theorists thus have an interest in correcting the distortions and in combatting the cynical anti-intellectualism on which the campaign feeds, whatever their views on the racial, sexual, and gender politics actually motivating the anti-PC campaign. We accordingly invite your suggestions on what might be done.

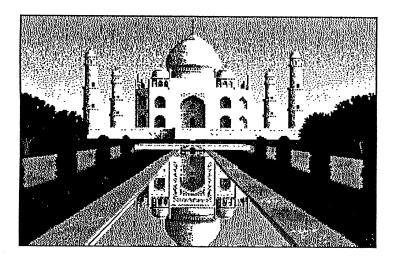
Sincerely,

Gary Lee Stonum

Martha Woodmansee

**Executive Directors** 

SCE News and Notices, new series, 3, summer 1991



## **Current Projects**

#### Intellectual Property and the Construction of Authorship

Contact: Martha Woodmansee (English), Case Western Reserve University or Peter Jaszi (Law), The American University

The Intellectual Property project is concerned with copyright law and the history of intellectual property in relation to the ideology of authorship and its various extensions. The project held a major conference April 19-21, 1991, at CWRU. About one hundred persons, primarily literary and legal scholars, attended. Plans are now under way for the publication of a volume of selected papers from the conference. In addition, the project is currently seeking funding for a second phase, to be devoted to cultural agency in an international context.

[Normally, we would list here the program for the April conference, or at least an abridged version of it. However, since we had printed enough souvenir programs, copies of these were sent to all members shortly after the conference. If you did not get a copy, a few are still available from the SCE office.]

### PACT (Problems of Affirmation in Cultural Theory)

Contact: James J. Sosnoski (English), Miami Univ. of Ohio or David Downing (English), Indiana University of Pennsylvania The PACT project is concerned with examining the possibilities of cultural affirmation, particularly in light of theory's perceived bias toward iconoclasm, demystification, and related forms of negativity. The project's initial presentations took place during the two SCE panels at the 1990 Modern Language Association meetings, December 27-30, in Chicago. Papers and responses included the following:

David Downing and James J. Sosnoski: "Problems of Affirmation"

Laura Donaldson: "Critical Theory and the New Mestiza: a Deconstructuralism for the 90s"

Paul H. Smith: "Asserting the Agent: Pedagogy and Culture"
John Brenkman: "Contingent Values and Political Commitments"
Robert Miklitsch: "Resisting Negation: the Work of Affirmation"
Patrick D. Murphy: "Affirmation and Agency in Ecofeminist
Dialogics"

Evan Watkins: "When I Win the Lottery"
Philip Goldstein and Betty R. McGraw, respondents

The project will continue this October with a symposium to be held at CWRU (See COMING EVENTS for details.)

#### **Cultural Studies and Pedagogy**

Contact: Anne Balsamo (Literature, Communication, and Culture), Georgia Tech; Kelly Coyle (Speech), Tulane, or Gita Rajan (English), Univ. of New Orleans

The project on Cultural Studies and Pedagogy is concerned with the relation between cultural studies and all aspects of teaching, curriculum, and disciplinary organization in colleges and universities. The project is sponsoring four sets of panels this year: three are upcoming (see COMING EVENTS) and a session at the International Communication Association has already taken place. In addition, plans have been made for a presentation at the next meeting of the Speech Communication Association. The organizers are also making initial arrangements for the publication of work from the project and for a major, culminating conference.

At the 1991 meeting of the International Communication Association, Keya Ganguly (Carnegie Mellon) spoke on "Teaching Post-Colonial Theory/Theorizing Post-Colonial Teaching." Van Cagle (Tulane) discussed

how he teaches "Youth and Mass Media" as a cultural studies course. Anne Balsamo examined the popularity of cultural studies approaches in US English Departments and addressed some questions of institutionalization. Respondent Paula Treichler (Univ. of Illinois) challenged the panelists to elaborate actual classroom practices more concretely.

#### Suggested and Potential Projects

#### The Scholarly Conference

Contact: David Damrosch (Comparative Literature), Columbia Univ.

David Damrosch continues to gather materials and compile a list of persons interested in examining the art and science of academic conferences. If this get under way as a full-fledged project, one possible outcome would be a handbook of serious reflections and practical advice.

#### Theory in an Electronic Age

Temporary contact: Gary Lee Stonum (English), Case Western Reserve

Although one conference panel has already been held (at the 1990) Midwest MLA and although a number of persons have expressed interest in examining the theoretical implications of computers and other electronic media, the project has been inactive most of the last year. (OK, OK, I've been busy. Sheesh!) To put the same news in a more positive form, we are eagerly looking for people to take an active role in organizing this project.

#### The New Economic Criticism

Contact: Martha Woodmansee, English, Case Western Reserve

A project on the interface between economics and literary theory is now in the planning stages. Two initial events will take place this year, an SCE-sponsored panel at the MMLA meeting (see COMING EVENTS) and a panel at the MLA sponsored by the Literary Criticism Division. Participants in the latter include Catherine Gallagher, Marc Shell, and Donald McCloskey.

## How to participate

## in SCE activities

Not so long ago people were all but discouraged from belonging to the SCE unless they were actively involved in its projects. Nowadays we do promise not to badger you if you just want to keep informed about the Society's doings, without more active participation. However the SCE remains an organization that exists primarily to assist and encourage its members in developing collaborative projects in literary theory. In other words, we want everyone to have the opportunity to initiate activities and to participate in ones already going on. Here is how to do so.

Perhaps the easiest way to get involved is to join an already established project, by writing to the organizers or by responding to the calls for papers listed in News and Notices and posted on the Electronic College of Theory.

A project may start as a panel at one of the regional MLAs and become, as interest and enthusiasm grow, the focus of specialized conferences or symposia, the topic of a special issue in a relevant journal, and the subject of one or more books. One can become involved in most projects at any stage in their progression, and project directors sometimes continue to welcome help in developing and organizing activities. However, participation in some events is limited to those who have expressed continuing interest, so it's best to become involved early.

Identifying promising new ideas and helping develop them is at least as important to the SCE as encouraging participation in already established projects. The only requirements for proposing a new activity are that the topic be related in some way to literary theory—an obviously broad, stretchable category—and that the work involve collaboration by a group of scholars. No solo projects, in other words, and (at least as we currently define things) no geological expeditions.

The first step in initiating a new topic is to write to the executive directors, Martha Woodmansee and Gary Stonum, with a description of your idea. If several people are involved at the outset, so much the better, but the SCE can also help put you in touch with others who have similar interests. The next step might be the organization of a conference panel at one of the regional MLAs, which the SCE can help arrange. It can also help with publicity, with the logistics of subsequent panels, conferences, and symposia, and with arrangements for publication of the work from a project. If approved by the Society's board of directors, funds are in some cases available for conferences devoted to SCE projects.

For those not currently interested in a full-scale project, there is another way to become involved. As mentioned above, the SCE of ten operates through the regional MLA's. Volunteers are needed to serve as liaisons to the SCE and its directors, especially in the Pacific Coast, New England and Rocky Mountain regions. Regional liaisons are responsible for the annual SCE panels. In some cases, they might themselves decide upon the topic, select the papers, and chair the panel. Alternatively, they might be the local contact for a panel organized as part of an ongoing project. In this case, the liaison would work with the director of the project in order to ensure, for example, that all regional deadlines are met.

## **Coming Events**

October 4 - 6, 1991 PACT Symposium

The SCE will sponsor a symposium on "Problems of Affirmation in Cultural Theory" at Case Western Reserve University. James Sosnoski and David Downing, the organizers of the PACT project as a whole, are also the organizers of this symposium.

The tentative list of participants includes Barbara Beisecker (Iowa), Michael Blitz (John Jay College, CUNY), Brian Caraher (Indiana), Mary Jean Corbett (Miami Univ. of Ohio), James Creech (Miami Univ. of Ohio), Laura Donaldson (Antioch), David Downing (Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania), Philip Goldstein (Delaware), Patricia Harkin (Toledo) Mark Hulbert (Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania), Ann Lowry (Illinois), Nancy Mack (Illinois), Steven Mailloux (UC-Irvine), Patrick McHugh (Iowa State), Robert Miklitsch (Tufts), Patrick D. Murphy (Indiana Univ. of Pennsylvania), Richard Ohmann (Wesleyan), James Phelan (Ohio State), R. Radhakrishnan (Massachusetts), James J. Sosnoski (Miami Univ. of Ohio), Gary Lee Stonum (Case Western Reserve), J. Elspeth Stucky (South Carolina), Victor J. Vitanza (Texas-Arlington), and Evan Watkins (Washington).

Note that SCE symposia differ from conferences roughly as seminars do from lecture courses. That is, in order to focus discussion, registration is limited to a comparatively small number of participants and to guests from the host institution. The symposium program will likely be complete by the time this newsletter goes to press, so if you are interested in the project, you should contact the directors about participating in subsequent activities.

October 31 - November 2, 1991 South Central MLA

Thanks to the good offices of our liaison, Patrick M Murphy, the SCE has recently affiliated with the South Central Modern Language Association. At this fall's SCMLA convention in San Antonio the first of what is expected to be an annual series of panels will be convened. For

further information about this year's meeting and plans for 1992, please contact Pat Murphy; it is likely that initial plans for next year will be made in San Antonio.

The SCE program is tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of Oct. 31. Participants include:

Chair: Patrick M. Murphy, Northeast Louisiana Univ.
"Empty Intention," Briankle G. Chang, Univ. of Alabama
"New Critics, New Marxists, New Protocols: Reflections on Recent
Theory," Tom Samet, Louisiana Scholars' College at
Northwestern State Univ.

"Periodizing Jameson: The Problem of a Postmodern History," Theron Britt, Memphis State Univ.

"Periodizing Postmodernity: The Legacy of Modernist Aesthetics," John N. Duvall, Memphis State Univ.

> November 14 - 16, 1991 South Atlantic MLA

Robert Casillo (Miami Univ. [FL]) has organized this year's program for the meeting in Atlanta. Full details are not yet available, but the panel will be a follow-up to last year's examination of postmodernism in arts such as painting, music, and dance. Presentations will include a paper by John Paul Russo, (Miami Univ. [FL]) and one by Lisa Maruca and Sarah Turner (Case Western Reserve) entitled "The Politics of Postmodern Parody: Twin Peaks and Others."

November 14 - 16, 1991 Midwest MLA

As it usually does, the SCE will sponsor two panels at the 1991 Midwest Modern Language Association meeting, which will be held in Chicago this year. One, organized by Anne Balsamo (Georgia Tech) and Deborah Jacobs (Drake), is part of the project on Cultural Studies and Pedagogy. The presentations will include:

"Survey and Discipline: Teaching Literature in the Context of Cultural Studies," John Mowitt, Univ. of Minnesota "Cultural Studies as Intervention," Michael Greer, Illinois State Univ

[title unavailable] Susan Ritchie, Ohio State Univ. [title unavailable] Jocelyn Cohen, Univ. of Minnesota

#### Respondent: David Shumway, Carnegie Mellon

The second panel, organized by Martha Woodmansee, will be devoted to "The New Economic Criticism," a topic also to be treated at a meeting of the Literary Criticism division at the 1991 MLA convention. Presentations in Chicago include:

Moderator: Sharon L. Quiroz, Univ. of Michigan

"Market Aesthetics: Standardization, Individuation, Proliferation,"
James P. Carson, Kenyon College

"Between Disciplines: What Economists have Learned from Us.
What We can Learn from Economists," Margueritte S.
Murphy, Bentley College, and Brian Cooper, Harvard
Univ.

"Money Changes Everything," Christina Crosby, Wesleyan Univ. Respondent: Mark Osteen, Loyola College (Md.)

December 27 - 30, 1991 Modern Language Association

The Modern Language Association meets this year in San Francisco. Both of the SCE sessions will be devoted to the project on Cultural Studies and Pedagogy; both have been organized by Gita Rajan, Univ. of New Orleans, and Kelly Coyle, Tulane Univ.

In addition to the program below, for which times are not yet available, the SCE will hold its annual business meeting, at a time and a place to be announced in the convention program issue of *PMLA*, and it will sponsor a cocktail party for all members and friends of the society, details to be announced later.

The first of the panels on cultural studies and pedagogy has as a subtitle, "Texts and Contexts." It will consist of three position papers and a series of responses by younger scholars.

"Authority and Empowerment in Culture Studies Pedagogy," Cary Nelson, Univ. of Illinois

"Anti-Disciplinary Logic of Culture Studies," Janice Radway, Duke Univ.

"Why Are They Saying Such Terrible Things About Culture Studies?" Robert Con Davis, Univ. of Oklahoma "The Perils of Post-Disciplinarity," Anne Balsamo, Georgia Institute of Technology

"Culture Studies: Euphemisms for Re-Colonization?, Gita Rajan, Univ. of New Orleans

"No Faith in the System," Kelly Coyle, Tulane Univ.

"The Politics of Making Culture," Deborah F. Jacobs, Drake Univ.

The second panel has as a subtitle "Dancing Through the Mine Fields of the 21st Century." Presentations include:

"Where is my Body Proper?: Body, Cultural Texts and Feminist Theory," Julia Balen, Univ. of Arizona

"Black Woman Scholar, Critic and Teacher: Dancing Through the Mine Fields of Race, Sex and Class," Joyce Ann Joyce, Univ. of Nebraska

"Feminisms for the Incurably Informed," Anne Balsamo, Georgia Institute of Technology

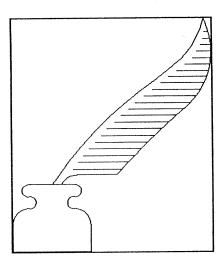
"Infraction and Interaction: From Opposition to Consensus-England to America," Jessica Munns, Univ. of New Orleans

Respondent: Annette Kolodny, Univ. of Arizona

## From the

## Mailbox

Lewis LB. Fried writes that the annotated primary and secondary bibliography devoted to Jacques Derrida is now available from Garland Publishing. Edited by Fried and William Schultz, the volume includes an introductory overview of Derrida's career and a chronology of his life and works.



Studies in Twentieth-Century Literature will devote a special issue to the late Louis Althusser. Accounts of his legacy, both its good and its bad aspects, may examine any one of several areas, including philosophy, literature, film, popular culture, psychoanalysis, semiotics, and critical theory. Send inquiries, summaries, or papers to Philip Goldstein, English Dept., Univ. of Delaware, Newark DE 19711.

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The American Comparative Literature Association will hold its annual meeting at Columbia University, April 3-5, 1992. Themes include Literature and Culture: 1492/1992, The Conflict of Interpretation, and Comparative Literature and Other Disciplines. Proposals for individual papers or conference panels should be sent by Sept. 30, 1991 to David Damrosch, 308 Philosophy Hall, Columbia Univ., New York, N.Y. 10027.

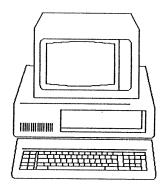
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The editorial collective of disClosure is now accepting submissions for its inaugural issues. disClosure is a social theory journal edited by graduate students at the University of Kentucky, and is designed to provide a forum for multi-disciplinary dialogue between the humanities and the social sciences. By exploring alternative forms of discourse, our goal is to address contemporary intellectual concerns through a rigorous examination of history, space, and representation. As our title suggests, we encourage fresh perspectives that transcend the strictures and structures set in place by traditional disciplinary thought.

Submissions for the first two issues should address the following topics: "Rethinking Contemporary Mythologies" (Deadline - 15 April 1991) and "The Commodification of Culture" (Deadline - 15 December 1991). Three copies of manuscripts prepared according to MLA guidelines, double spaced, and less than 10,000 words should be addressed to disClosure, 106 Student Center, Univ. of Kentucky, Lexington, KY 40506-0026.

# The Electronic College of Theory Goes Correspondence School

News and discussions within the Electronic College of Theory will soon circulate as electronic mail, a change that should make it easier for a great many more SCE members to participate. Rather than an electronic bulletin board that members must seek out actively (of ten with great difficulty, we hear), beginning September 1, 1991, the College will operate primarily as an e-mail distribution system. This means that the news, questions, and discussions sent to the College will be bundled appropriately and then redispatched to the individual e-mail account of any SCE member wishing to participate.



To be a part of the College, SCE members will thus now need only to have an electronic mail address on any system linked by gateway to one of the major networks (Internet, Bitnet, Janet, Northnet, etc.). Most college and university systems are so linked, as is at least one commercial outfit, Compuserve.

If you wish to participate in the Electronic College of Theory, please send an e-mail request to the SCE. The Internet address is xx124@po.cwru.edu; via Bitnet the address is xx124!po.cwru.edu@cunyvm. From other networks consult your local experts about addressing mail to an Internet host.

We already have e-mail addresses for some of you, including all those previously involved in the College. By mid-September we will have sent out at least one test mailing to these addresses. If you have not heard from us by then, please let us know; the likely cause is that we have mistranscribed the address.

We make the change because so few SCE members have been able to make use of the older system, which runs as a bulletin board with Cleveland FreeNet. To get to it requires either a telephone call via modem (long-distance for most persons) or access to telnet software (for many humanists an unlikely, unavailable, or baffling option). At least for a while, however, we will continue the bulletin board as well, pending further thought on how best to maintain archives of announcements, discussion topics, and queries.

Like most computer-based discussion groups and indeed like most non-electronic ones, the College will continue to depend chiefly on your contributions. Here in Cleveland we will attempt to be an active collection point for dispatching conferences announcements, calls for papers, news about SCE projects, and other calendar items. However, we hope that much of the traffic in the College gets initiated by you. Among other contributions we welcome announcements and news of interest to theorists, questions about topics in the field, questions about the SCE, and reviews of articles, conferences, or books. Oh, and our diminutive colleage Dr. Truth reminds us that, dollinks, all you social constructionists simply must construct for us whatever juicy items academic cafe society longs to hear. Anti-foundationalists, meanwhile, are asked to contribute baseless rumors, unfounded gossip and bavardage en abyme.

## **Good Text**

.... with Doctor Truth



Dear Dr. Truth:

What's all this about anti-foundationalism. It's all very well for skinny little anorexics to dispense with foundations, but there are people out here who need corsets and girdles. Have you no sensitivity to the abdominally impaired?

> R. Barr Upper Sandusky, OH

Dear Mr or Ms. Barr:

It's not foundations as in garments, it's foundations as in grounds, funda-

ments, the bottoms of things ... oh, never mind.

#### Dear Dr. Truth:

I intend to apply for graduate programs in literature next year and would like to study with a professor named Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Have you heard of him? I believe he is better known by his nickname, Skip. My question is simply about where I should apply. Can you tell me where Dr. Gates will be teaching?

Rutherford Calhoun Southern Illinois Maritime Academy

Dear Mr. Calhoun:

You are having a little joke with Dr. Truth, no?

Or perhaps not. Perhaps you ask in good faith, in which case I advise you that for current news of Skip Gates's whereabouts you must read the New York *Times* every day. Carefully.

Dear Dr. Truth:

Help me, please. I just began graduate study at a small private university in the Northeast, where all they teach us are English poems and Elvish epigraphy. But whenever I visit my friends at Big Eight schools they are always using big words and talking about Foocoo, Grahamsy and Earygeary. How can keep up with them and maybe even learn to write books for Methuen?

Abashed New Haven, CT

#### Dear Abashed:

Yours is a common problem, though it more of ten strikes faculty fiftysomethings obliged to talk to the new hires. Fortunately, for some years now it has been possible to consult the definitive bluffer's guide to literary theory, the classic *MLN* article entitled "How to be a Newer Critic," by Thersites Minor.

The authorship of the article is pseudonymous, of course, but those with the right stuff will recognize the Wan-Eyed Mack, itself a composite pen name for the Lehrer brothers: Jim, Tom, and Kniff. They will also

know that so little has changed in the last decade that Thersites hardly needs updating. However, dollinks, because Dr. Truth will never fail you and because someone has probably already torn out the pages from your library's copy, here are a few of Thersites's rules, along with some heretofore unrevealed corollaries (as derived schizologically by the Young Thersitikoi) and one manuscript addition by the reclusive Master themself.

The Law of Genre: The title of a critical essay must never reveal the subject under discussion.

The Second Law of Higher Criticism: Abstraction drives out application.

The Second Law Explained and Exculpated: Never explain. Never apologize.

The Maximal Corollary of the Second Law: Formalization is the opium of the insecure.

The First Law of Higher Criticism: Do not forget your umbrella. Lacan's Quadruple Lemma: Cover your traces; retrodict your references; confuse your contexts; occult your occasions. The less the readers see, the more passionately they believe.

The Dialectic of Dialogism: Respect by fellow critics is in inverse ration to comprehension.

The Exhaustion Theorem: When a critical system can produce certifiable disciples, its day is over.

The Immutable Law of the Marketplace: The last critical audience to decline is the export market.

The Congestion Theorem: Critical production rises as the square of the formation of tenure committees.

The Paralogism of Neo-Futurity: The only safe prefix is post. Universal Boundary 2 Conditions: In a closed critical system, every critic tends to rise to the level of incomprehensibility.

The Tristram Shandy Principle: Critics of genius contrive to have the reader do the work of the author.

Duke's Ukase: It is better to be attacked by an Insider than praised by an Outsider.

Louis Napoleon's Last Theorem. All great events in critical history occur twice—first as scandal and second as textbook.

Pocock's New Historicist Precept: L'Histoire c'est les Autres; le Texte c'est Moi.

Doctor Lizardo's Laws: Literary history is made at night. Textuality is what you are in the dark.

La regle du jeu: Text dissimulates object. Object breaks mirror. Mirror reflects gaze of the other.

Le supplement du jeu: The gaze of the other petrifies the text. Miller's Credo: I believe in the canon. Cheney's Counterpunch: You better. Doctrine of the One True Yogi: You can observe a lot just by watching.

Dear Dr. Truth:

I don't know how it is with you, babe, but like for me the tube is totally more awesome than reading books. I mean, it's like the 90s already, isn't it? But this isn't France, man, where like they arrange things better and you get all these righteous Ecole Normale dudes on TV. Here, man, all we get is like, maybe, Stanley Fish and Catherine Stimpson on basic cable, getting blown away by the Righties. And I just can't like deal with her, anyway, 'cause she talks just like my mom at a PTA meeting. Oh, yeah, and I did see this Camille Paglia chick, like, hawking her book on the Home Shopping Network, but somebody told me she's just Frank Lentricchia in drag (or was it the other way around?).

So, like, do we get some bitchin theory on TV or do I have to go find where I left my library card?

Theory Dude Venice, CA

Dear Mr. Dude:

Take heart (and also speech lessons), my little theory fan, for Dr. Truth understands on good report that PBS is currently negotiating for an international theory series, starring Jacques Derrida. Each week he and his intrepid crew from the College de Philosophie will sail the seven seas in search of textual adventure. Captain Jacques's special glass-bottomed boat, the Pharmakos, is still under deconstruction in Le Havre, so you will have to wait a little while longer. But soon all of us will be able to tune in to "Sur le texte" and watch the Captain do battle with every surly text from Anon to Zeno.

Application for Membership in the Society for Critical Exchange

Name:

Mailing Address:

New member / / Renewal for 1991 / / Department and Institution Address (if different from al

Telephone work:

home:

Areas or projects of interest:

1991 dues (\$15 regular, \$20 joint, \$10 student, part-time, retired or unemployed, \$20 outside North America).

Total (remit to The Society for Critical Exchange, Guilford House, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland OH