Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction
Stephen Eric Bronner

Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction explores the concepts and themes that distinguished critical theory from its more traditional philosophical competitors. Critical theory emerged in the 1920s from the work of the Frankfurt School, the circle of German–Jewish academics who sought to diagnose and cure the ills of society. Sketches of leading representatives of this critical tradition, such as Georg Lukács and Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Jürgen Habermas, as well as many of its seminal texts and empirical investigations, are presented. Concepts such as method and agency, alienation and reification, the culture industry and repressive tolerance, non-identity, and utopia are explained and discussed.

Derrida: A Very Short Introduction
Simon Glendinning

Derrida: A Very Short Introduction explores both the difficulty and significance of the work of Derrida. It explains the theory of deconstruction, presenting Derrida's challenging ideas as a significant contribution to and a powerful reading of, our philosophical heritage. Defending Derrida against many of the charges that were levelled against him by the analytical philosophical community, this VSI nevertheless shows why his work inspires such passionate criticism. It explores his most famous and influential texts to show how and why Derrida's work of deconstruction is inspired not by a ‘critical frenzy’, but by a loving respect for philosophy.

Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction
Thomas Flynn

Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction
Existentialism: A Very Short Introduction examines one of the leading philosophical movements of the twentieth century. Focusing on its seven leading figures: Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, de Beauvoir, Merleau–Ponty, and Camus, this VSI considers the key themes of the movement, which emphasized individuality, free will, and personal responsibility in the modern world. Drawing on the movement's varied relationships with the arts, humanism, and politics, it clarifies the philosophy and original meaning of ‘existentialism’ — which has tended to be obscured by misappropriation. By placing the philosophy in its political context, this VSI highlights the continuing relevance of existentialism.

Foucault: A Very Short Introduction

Gary Gutting

Foucault: A Very Short Introductions explores the highlights of Foucault's life and thoughts on literature, in particular the avant-garde scene; his philosophical and historical work; his treatment of knowledge and power in modern society; and his thoughts on sexuality. Foucault was one of those rare philosophers who became a cult figure. From aesthetics to the penal system, from madness and civilization to avant-garde literature, Foucault was happy to reject old models of thinking and replace them with versions that are still widely debated today. A major influence on Queer Theory and gender, he also wrote on architecture, history, law, medicine, literature, politics, and of course philosophy.

Habermas: A Very Short Introduction

James Gordon Finlayson

Habermas: A Very Short Introduction provides an overview of Jürgen Habermas's forbiddingly complex philosophy using concrete examples. Habermas is arguably the most influential German philosopher alive today. He has influenced a variety of fields, including philosophy, political and social theory, cultural studies, sociology, and literary studies. He has commented widely on subjects such as Marxism, the importance and effectiveness of communication, the reunification of Germany, and the European Union. What are the theoretical underpinnings of Habermas's social theory? How can his social theory be applied to the fields of ethics, politics, and law? How have Habermas's social and political theories informed his writing on contemporary, political, and social problems?
Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction
Michael Inwood

Heidegger: A Very Short Introduction provides an invaluable guide to the complex and voluminous thought of one of the 20th century’s greatest yet most enigmatic and divisive philosophers. It focuses on Martin Heidegger’s most important work, Being and Time, to explore its major themes of existence in the world, inauthenticity, guilt, destiny, truth, and the nature of time. These themes are then reassessed in the light of Heidegger’s multifaceted later thought, and how, despite its diversity, it hangs together as a single, coherent project. Finally, this VSI turns to Heidegger’s Nazism and anti-Semitism, to reveal its deep connection with his personality and overall view of philosophy.

Kierkegaard: A Very Short Introduction
Patrick Gardiner

Kierkegaard: A Very Short Introduction shows how Kierkegaard developed his views in emphatic opposition to prevailing opinions. It describes his reaction to the ethical and religious theories of Kant and Hegel, and contrasts his position with doctrines advanced by people like Feuerbach and Marx. Kierkegaard's seminal diagnosis of the human condition, which emphasizes the significance of individual choice, has arguably been his most striking philosophical legacy, particularly for the growth of existentialism. What did Kierkegaard conceive of as the basis of religious belief? How did he come about his views on the nature of the human condition? How has Kierkegaard influenced contemporary thought?

Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction
Christopher Butler

How can postmodernism be defined? Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction challenges and explores the key ideas of postmodernists, and their engagement with theory, literature, the visual arts, film, architecture, and music. A artists, intellectuals, critics, and social scientists are treated ‘as if they were all members of a loosely constituted and quarrelsome political party’ — a party which includes such members as Cindy Sherman, Salman Rushdie, Jacques Derrida, Walter Abish, and Richard Rorty — creating a vastly entertaining framework in which to unravel the mysteries of the ‘postmodern condition’, from the politicizing of museum culture to the cult of the politically correct.
Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction
Catherine Belsey

Poststructuralism: A Very Short Introduction traces the key arguments that have led poststructuralists to challenge traditional theories of language and culture. What is language? Is there such thing as a private language? What is the relationship between language and knowledge? Poststructuralism is a response to structuralism, which is an intellectual movement arguing that human culture may be understood by means of a structure that differs from reality and abstract ideas. Poststructuralism names a theory, or a group of theories, concerning the relationship between human beings, the world, and the practice of making and reproducing meanings.

Russell: A Very Short Introduction
A. C. Grayling

Russell: A Very Short Introduction provides an account of the life of Bertrand Russell (1872–1970), one of the most famous and important philosophers of the twentieth century. It introduces both his technical contributions to logic and philosophy, and his wide-ranging views on education, politics, war, and sexual morality. Russell is credited with being one of the prime movers of Analytic Philosophy, and with having played a part in the revolution in social attitudes witnessed throughout the twentieth-century world. This VSI gives a clear survey of Russell's achievements across their whole range.

Wittgenstein: A Very Short Introduction
A. C. Grayling

Wittgenstein: A Very Short Introduction explains the nature and impact of Wittgenstein's views in terms of twentieth-century analytical philosophy and describes both his early and later philosophy, the differences and connections between them, and Wittgenstein's continuing influence on contemporary thought. Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951) was an extraordinarily original philosopher, whose influence on twentieth-century thinking goes well beyond philosophy itself, extending to literature, linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and sociology. His views have given rise to many new developments in the philosophy of language, logic, and philosophy of mind.