PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais Humphrey House #202
Office Hours: 1) Mon. 3:00 - 5:00 2) Wed. 12:00 - 1:00 3) By Appointment.

COURSE GOALS:
This course introduces students to the basic epistemological and normative presuppositions of social inquiry by surveying both classical and contemporary debates about the logic of the social sciences. Case studies of classical debates raise the following questions: What distinguishes the social sciences from both the humanities and the sciences of nature? In studying human beings, do social researchers look at the micro-level -- for the causes, reasons, motives, meanings, or rules of individual actions -- or, at the macro-level -- for social functions, institutions, structures, practices and fields? How do micro-individual and macro-social levels of explanation connect up? Do social scientists explain or interpret human affairs? Are the social sciences descriptive, prescriptive or both? Contemporary case studies raise the following questions: How has the critique of Western Logocentrism altered traditional conceptions of individual and social development? Do the Western social sciences offer universal standards of rationality or merely one among many ethical value systems? Are radical ethnomethodology and multiculturalism alternatives to, or merely critical realignments of, the Western social sciences. This course is intended as an historical and critical introduction to contemporary debates about multiculturalism.

EVALUATION:
Students will be evaluated on the basis of class participation, vocabulary quizzes, midterm examinations and a final paper.

Class Participation, seminar presentations and discussion=20%
Midterm examinations 2 @ 15% each=30%
Quizzes 5 @ 5% each=25%
Final Paper 10-15 pages=25%

POLICIES:
Open, respectful and critical discussion is the life-blood of this course. Quizzes offer students and professor the opportunity to identify and to clarify central terms/concepts. The midterm examinations test comprehension of key philosophical issues, and the final paper offers students the opportunity to respond in depth to a single topic. The final paper is due on the day scheduled for the final examination. 3 unexcused absences will result in a full grade reduction.

TEXTS:

THEMATIC BREAKDOWN OF COURSE

I. INTRODUCTION: (2 Weeks)
A. The Rise of the Mathematical Natural Sciences and the Disintegration of Cosmological and Theological Worldviews.
B. The Hegemony of the Positivistic Self-understanding of the Sciences in 17th and 18th Centuries.
D. The Disintegration of Aristotelian Teleology and Idealist Philosophy of History Under the Press of Physics and Biology.

II. CLASSIC SOCIOLOGICAL THEORIES AND THE CONCEPTUAL DEFICITS: MARX, WEBER AND DURKHEIM. (2 Weeks)

III. MODELS OF ACTION AND THE METHODOLOGICAL INDIVIDUALISM/HOLISM ISSUE: (2 Weeks)
A. Models of Action and Society:
   2. Phenomenology.
   3. Psychoanalysis.
   4. 3 Forms of Materialism (Feuerbach, Marx and Habermas)
   5. Behaviorism.
   7. Hermeneutics.
   8. Linguistics.
   10. Functional and Macro-structural explanations.
   12. Ethnomethodology.

IV. CASE STUDIES OF TRADITIONAL MODELS OF INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CRITIQUE OF WESTERN LOGOCENTRISM: (2 Weeks)
A. Developmental Models in Moral Psychology.
B. Neo-Materialist and Systems-Theoretic Models of Social Development.

V. THE NEW INDETERMINATE LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND ITS CRITICS: (1 Week)

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