PHILOSOPHY OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

SPRING, 1999

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

PROFESSOR: Chris Latiolais
Philosophy Department
Kalamazoo College
Humphrey House #202
Offices Hours:
1) Mon. 2:00 - 3:45
2) Tues. 10:30 - 11:30
3) By Appointment.

COURSE GOALS:

This course introduces students to the basic epistemological and normative presuppositions of the social inquiry by surveying both classical and contemporary debates on 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:


READING SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION:

TUE., MARCH 29TH.  WEEK ONE
A. TRADITIONAL DEBATES CONCERNING THE LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES.

THUR., APRIL 1ST.

1. Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition" [read before Tuesday].
2. FILM: My Beautiful Launderette

TUES., APRIL 6TH. WEEK TWO

1. Lecture: Multiculturalism and the "Politics of Recognition"
2. Introduction (Bohman).
3. "The Old Logic of the Social Sciences" (Bohman).

WEDNESDAY EVENING FILM: Hester Street.

THURS., APRIL 8TH.

1. "The Old Logic of the Social Sciences" (Cont.).
2. Quiz #1.

B. THE NEW LOGIC OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES:

TUE., APRIL 13TH WEEK THREE


THURS., APRIL 15TH.

3. Quiz #2.

INTERPRETATION AND MEANING: THE VERSTEHEN APPROACH:

TUE., APRIL 20TH. WEEK FOUR

1. "Interpretation and Indeterminacy" (Bohman, pp. 102-146).
THURS., APRIL 22ND.


2. Quiz #3.

TUE., APRIL 27TH: WEEK FIVE


THURS., APRIL 29TH.


2. "Taylor on Interpretation and the Sciences of Man," Michael Martin (pp. 259-281).

3. Midterm Examination # 1.

RATIONALITY AND INTERPRETATION:

TUES., MAY 4TH: WEEK SIX


2. "The Status of Rationality Assumptions in Interpretation and in the Explanation of Action," Dagfinn Follesdal (pp. 299-311).

THURS., MAY 6TH.


2. Quiz #4.

FUNCTIONAL EXPLANATIONS:

TUES., MAY 11TH: WEEK SEVEN


THURS., MAY 13TH.
1. Midterm Examination #2.

**REDUCTIONISM, INDIVIDUALISM AND HOLISM:**

TUES., APRIL 18TH.

2. "The Macro-Micro Relation" (Bohman).

THURS., APRIL 20TH.

2. Quiz # 5.

**RATIONALITY; OBJECTIVITY AND VALUE:**

TUES., MAY 25TH.

1. "Criticism and Explanation" (Bohman).

THURS., MAY 27TH.

1. "Conclusion: Philosophy and the Social Sciences" (Bohman).

TUES., JUNE 1ST.

1. Review.

THURS., JUNE 3RD.

1. Student Evaluations.

FINALS WEEK