Hu5004 - Communication in Cultural Contexts

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Course Description:

This course is designed to provide students with a critical approach to the philosophical and theoretical foundations of the humanities in the broadest conception of that term. More specifically this course will be examining the underlying foundations of communication, culture, and context. This requires an examination of the essential interrelatedness of world, language, and human being that represent the ontological condition for communication, culture, and context. In this regard we will be looking centrally at the work of central figures in European philosophical thought. Throughout we will be focusing on the necessary interconnection of self, world, and “the other” and the mediums that ground this interconnection, e.g., history, language, and culture/society.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course students will have been introduced to many of the key figures and issues that situate much of the contemporary scholarship taking place in the humanities and social sciences. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, students will not have merely absorbed, but will have concretely engaged with these figures and issues.

Required Texts:

The course readings will be on the course’s blackboard page.

Course Requirements:

During the semester I will also ask you to turn in four “reflection papers.” These should be between three to five pages in length (although I will be lenient about papers that are a bit longer.) In these papers, you will reflect upon an issue that grabbed your interest. That is you will write a critical analysis of this issue and the texts/thinkers/ideas implicated within it. The hope is that one or more of these reflection papers will lead to a term paper proposal (again about 3 – 5 pages) on a topic of your choosing that will be due at the beginning of the thirteenth week of class. At the end of the semester you will turn in a term paper of approximately 20 - 25 pages. It goes without saying that throughout the semester you will be expected to participate in class discussions. The term paper will be due by the end of finals week - April 29th, 2011.

Grading:

The breakdown for grading purposes is as follows:
Participation – 20%
Reflection Papers - 32%
Term Paper – 48%
Course Itinerary:

Week 1  Introduction, various readings.

Week 2  The pinnacle of enlightenment thought:
        Husserl - *The Vienna Lecture*.

Week 3  Human Being (*Dasein*) as Being-in-the-World:

Week 4  *Dasein*, self, others and care:
        Heidegger - *Being and Time*, pp. 149 - 244.

Week 5  The embodiment of Being-in-the-World:

Week 6  The embodiment of Being-in-the-World:

Week 7  Humanity and the critique of the essence of modern technology:
        Heidegger - “‘Modern Science, Metaphysics, and Mathematics’”
        Heidegger - “The Question Concerning Technology”

Week 8  Thinking beyond the essence of modern technology:
        Heidegger - “Building Dwelling Thinking”
        Heidegger - “The Way to Language”

Week 9  Hermeneutics, history and tradition:

Week 10 Hermeneutics, history and tradition:
        Gadamer – *Truth and Method*, Part Three, Section 3

Week 11 Making the world safe for ethics:
        Levinas - *Ethics as First Philosophy*

Week 12 Foucault, Power and Post-Modernism
        Foucault – *Truth and Power*
        Foucault – *Discourse on Language*
        Jean-François Lyotard - *What is Postmodernism?*

Week 13 Neo-Marxism and the critique of enlightenment:
        Horkheimer and Adorno - *The Concept of Enlightenment*
        Georg Lukács - *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*
        Adorno - *The Culture Industry*

Week 14 Wrap-up

Week 15 Term Papers Due.