

PHL 303: Contemporary Philosophy
Fall 2008

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Office Hours: 2:15-3:45MW
12:30-2:15Tues. & by appt.
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www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/philosophy/heikes/303.html

Course Texts: *Basic Writings*, Martin Heidegger (Harper and Row)
Philosophical Investigations, Ludwig Wittgenstein (MacMillian)
Word and Object, Willard V.O. Quine (MIT Press)
Consequences of Pragmatism, Richard Rorty (Univ. of Minnesota Press)

Course Description and Goal:

One of the major themes of 20th century philosophy is its fundamental concern with language. Philosophers' attempts to understand language led to transformations in every branch of philosophy, from metaphysics to epistemology to ethics. In this course, we will examine how the questions of language impacted the questions we philosophers ask and the answers we offer to these questions. Our focus will be primarily on how questions of language impact contemporary metaphysics and epistemology.

The course will be divided into two main sections, the first dealing with the first half of the 20th century, the second dealing with the latter half of the century. We will begin with Heidegger and Wittgenstein, then move on to Quine and Rorty. Each of these philosophers is radically different from each other, but the questions each asks about the nature of language are amazingly similar to each other, (although Rorty does provide his own distinctive take on the philosophy of language).

Our goal will be to gain an understanding of some of the representative debates of philosophy over the past century, debates that span the distinctions between the analytic, continental, and pragmatist philosophical traditions.

Course Requirements:

There will be an essay exam after each philosopher we cover. Each exam will be worth 25% of your course grade. The exams may be cumulative.

- Heidegger exam, week of Sept. 8
- Wittgenstein exam, week of Oct. 6
- Quine exam, week of Nov. 3
- Rorty exam, week of Dec. 1 (scheduled final exam period)

For each section of the course, I will add 5 points to your exam grade if you miss no more than one class meeting during that section.

Course Outline: We will spend 3-4 weeks on each philosopher. After each section of the course, there will be an essay exam. Due dates for the readings will be announced in class.

Week 1-3

Heidegger, *Basic Writings* (Harper Collins 0-06-063845-1)
Letter on Humanism (pp. 193-242)
Building Dwelling Thinking (pp. 323-339)
The End of Philosophy and the Task of Thinking (pp. 373-392)

Week 4

Review and Test

Week 5-7

Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (MacMillan 0-02-428810-1)

§ 1-32

§ 53-92

§ 116-138

§ 199-293

§ 309

Week 8

Review and Test

Week 9-11

Quine, *Word and Object* (MIT Press 0-262-67001-1)

Language and Truth (pp. 1-25)

Translation and Meaning (pp. 26-79)

Week 12

Review and Test

Week 13-15

Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (University of Minnesota Press 0-8166-1064-9)

Introduction: Pragmatism and Philosophy (xiii-xlvii)

The World Well Lost (pp. 3-18)

Keeping Philosophy Pure: An Essay on Wittgenstein (pp. 19-36)

Overcoming Tradition: Dewey and Heidegger (pp. 37-59)

Week 16

Review and Test

UAH is committed to the fundamental values of preserving academic honesty as defined in the Student Handbook (7.III.A). The instructor reserves the right to utilize electronic means to help prevent plagiarism. Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service, as well as additional information about the company, are described at www.uah.edu/library/turnitin.