PHIL 3500 – The Modern World View

2730 Sangren Hall

Mon. & Wed. 2:00-3:40

Instructor: james.v.martin@wmich.edu (3012 Moore Hall, by appointment)

TA: jared.a.park@wmich.edu (3022 Moore Hall, Tues. 10-11 and by appointment)

Required Texts: All readings will be made available at http://homepages.wmich.edu/~jnk5408.

Course Description: The modern world is shaped by, and understood in terms of, modern theories and concepts that have developed over the course of roughly the last century. This course will offer a broad survey of some of the key ideas that constitute our contemporary view of the world. We will explore modern ideas about human beings (including our evolution, language, and mind); modern views of our societies (including their politics, ideologies, institutions, economics, and art); and modern views of the physical world we inhabit (including methods of reasoning, physics, computer science, mathematics, and history). Our goal will be not only to understand these important ideas, but also to reflect on how they have changed our values and our understanding of our place in the world.

Schedule and Readings:

Part I: Modern views of the human animal

		Evolution and the "evo-devo" revolution		
Week 1	Jan. 11	Darwin, The Origin of Species, Chs. I-IV (selections)		
	Jan. 13	Carroll, The Making of the Fittest: DNA and the Ultimate Forensic Record of		
		Evolution, Ch. 8		
		Linguistics and the cognitive revolution		
Week 2	Jan. 18	MLK Day (No Class)		
	Jan. 20	Chomsky, A Review of B.F. Skinner's Verbal Behavior		
		(optional) Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax, Ch. 1.1, 4, 8		
		Modern perspectives on the mind		
Week 3	Jan. 25	Fodor, The Mind Doesn't Work That Way, Introduction and Chs. 1-2		
	Jan. 27	Cohen, How to Read Freud, Chs. 1-3		
		Part II: Modern views of human society		
		Turv III Milouotii Mema of ilumum society		
		Contemporary questions in politics		
Week 4	Feb. 1	Appiah, Grounding Human Rights		
	Feb. 3	Held, The Transformation of Political Community: Rethinking Democracy in the		
		Context of Globalization		

Week 5	Feb. 8 Feb. 10	Propaganda and ideology in modern life Geuss, The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School, Ch. 1 Herman and Chomsky, Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media, Ch. 1
Week 6	Feb. 15 Feb. 17	Sociological perspectives on modern institutions and power relations Weber, Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology (excerpts) Foucault, The Subject and Power
Week 7	Feb. 22 Feb. 24	Contemporary views of race and gender Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Part VII Coates, Between the World and Me (excerpt) (optional) Said, Orientalism, Introduction
Week 8	Feb. 29 Mar. 2	Some key ideas and methods in economics Marx, Value, Price, and Profit, Ch. VI to the end Binmore, Game Theory: A Very Short Introduction, Chs. 1 and 4
Week 9	Mar. 14 Mar. 16	Understanding modern art and modern art criticism Wimsatt and Beardsley, The Intentional Fallacy Caputo, Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida, Ch. II.3 (after p. 12 is optional) (MIDTERM DISTRIBUTED)
		Part III: Modern views of the world around us
Week 10	Mar. 21 Mar. 23	Probabilistic reasoning Hacking, An Introduction to Probability and Inductive Logic, Chs. 3-6 Stone, Bayes' Rule: A Tutorial Introduction to Bayesian Analysis, Ch. 1 (MIDTERM DUE)
Week 11	Mar. 28 Mar. 30	Modern physics: relativity and quantum theory Russell, ABC of Relativity, Chs. 1-5 Polkinghorne, Quantum Theory: A Very Short Introduction (excerpt)
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Week 12	Apr. 4 Apr. 6	Some important notions regarding computers and computation Cutland, Computability: An Introduction to Recursive Function Theory, Ch. 1.1-3 Handout on cryptography and the RSA algorithm

Contemporary views about history and historical inquiry

Week 14 Apr. 18 Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Chs. I, IV, and IX

Apr. 20 Kosso, Philosophy of Historiography (FINAL PAPER DUE)

Assignments:

Weekly Homeworks	50%	Due at the beginning of class
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Participation 15% Discussion is essential in a course like this

Accommodations: Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact me and the appropriate Disability Services office at the beginning of the semester. The two disability service offices on campus are: Disabled Student Resources and Services (269) 387-2116 and the Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (269) 387-4411.

Academic Honesty: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the university's policies and procedures that pertain to Academic Honesty. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment.