PHILOSOPHICAL PROBLEMS IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES: THEORETICAL, CRITICAL, IDEOLOGICAL, AND PEDAGOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

Professor: Omar Swartz, J.D., Ph.D.
Office: Modular MC-01 (Located East of the Tivoli Building)
Office Hours: M 3-5 pm and by appointment
Office Phone: 303-556-5660
Email: Omar.Swartz@ucdenver.edu (email is the best way to reach me)
Meeting Times: Mondays 5-7:50 pm
Meeting Place: MC-04
MHMSS Program Web Address: http://clas.ucdenver.edu/ict/index.html

Course Goals:

1. To provide students with an introduction to core problems, controversies, vocabularies, and issues in the social sciences and humanities while helping them to read, understand, and produce scholarship to the standards and expectations of graduate study in the MHMSS program.

2. To create opportunities for students to become colleagues, to collaborate with one another intellectually, and to develop a support system (i.e., peer groups) to maximize their graduate school and learning experience.

3. To orient students toward potential thesis or project ideas and provide a multi-semester roadmap for the development of those ideas.

4. To help students understand the importance of having an Intellectual Graduate Mentor (IGM) to guide them academically through the program and to generate an informed list of potential mentors by the end of the semester.

Course Description:

This graduate seminar offers the opportunity for students to enter an ongoing conversation among scholars across different fields as well as a forum for intellectual exchange among peers. Students will be expected to take an active role in the course as evidenced by close, critical attention to the readings; contributions to discussion; organized presentations of their research; and engaged, informed writing. We will explore perennial problems and controversies in the social sciences and humanities that center on communication, language, knowledge, law, education, politics, and the social construction of reality. We will study various epistemological, pedagogical, philosophical, and rhetorical views of language and scholarly inquiry, emphasizing critical and postmodern perspectives. Specific topics that we will accentuate across the semester include: alienation, authenticity, autonomy, civility (and incivility), commodification, contingency, education (its purposes, potentials, and functions), false consciousness, the gaze, hegemony, insanity, irony, nihilism, normalization, paradigms, poetry, power, religion and irrationality.
Students in this course will engage graduate study and scholarship as a social, creative, and joyful activity, as well as become acclimated to the functions and limitations of disciplinization and the value of an interdisciplinary perspective within a professional identity. Ultimately, students should leave this course with a better understanding of their agency as historical beings and critical scholars in contemporary cultural, political, and intellectual life as well as have a practical plan for working toward their thesis or project.

In order to create opportunities for graduate students to become colleagues and to develop a support system (i.e., peer groups) for maximizing their graduate school experience, students are encouraged to break into small groups to work with for the entire semester. I recommend that each student meet two to three hours a week or more with her or his group outside of class (active participation in these groups will count toward students' participation grade as documented through self-report). The purpose of the peer group is to aid the students in the enculturation and socialization process of graduate school and to help create community and continuity across our graduate program. In these meetings, students should discuss the course readings among themselves and read and comment upon each student’s papers as they are being written over the course of the semester. Students should share what they are learning about faculty resources in other departments. Overall, students are expected to model for each other the best practices of graduate study.

***With the goal of creating community among the students in this course, students are invited to a class dinner at my house on some Saturday or Sunday early in the semester. We will determine the date in class during the first or second week.***

Course reading materials are available on Blackboard. Go to https://blackboard.cudenver.edu or www.cuonline.edu and click on Blackboard Log on the right hand side of the page. Students with technical questions about this technology should email inquiry@cuonline.edu or call (303) 556-6505. Students should contact me if they have trouble accessing the readings or with any other concerns. In addition, I have paper copies of all the readings and students may borrow these to photocopy. Besides the readings on Blackboard, there are two books (students can purchase a copy of my book directly from me and receive my author’s 40% discount (i.e., $20). The other book can be purchased online.

**Assignments:**

1. **Attendance, Class Participation, and Issues (100 points collectively):**
   Attendance for each session of this course is mandatory. Students who cannot attend class should have an excusable justification (i.e., illness, family emergency). Every unexcused absence will result in loss of 20 points from the student’s grade. Moreover, as this course is a seminar, the responsibility for discussion rests with the students. Thus, all students are expected to contribute to the weekly class discussions as well as to the creation of a positive and supportive classroom learning environment. Grading criteria for participation include the following behaviors: preparedness; active listening; thoughtful comments, questions and responses to the course material and to comments made by other students; showing initiative; a willingness to allow others to speak; soliciting feedback from instructor and other students and responding well to feedback; and demonstrating cumulative learning.

   To aid in her/his class participation experience, each student is required (starting the second week of class) to generate each week two-three issues
on the readings (1-2 pages single spaced total). These issues must substantive and indicative of the student’s mental engagement with the material. More specifically, these issues are points of contention that the student wants to assert with regard to a particular line of reasoning or argument taken up in the literature. The issues should illustrate a breadth of comprehension and/or provide a critical assessment of the reading. I will work with students in class to help them learn how to identify, expand, and improve upon their articulation of issues. These issues (labeled with the appropriate week) should be sent to the class email list located on Blackboard by Sunday afternoon each week at 2 p.m. Students should print out, read, and be prepared to discuss salient issues that emerge from this exercise each week. Issues will be graded each week as “excellent” (+), “satisfactory” (√), or “unsatisfactory” (-).

2. **Exploring the Faculty Resources of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) (100 points).** The MHMSS program is an interdisciplinary program in CLAS. This means that the vast majority of the students’ educational experience will come from their interaction with faculty throughout the college. In addition to taking courses from departments throughout CLAS, students need to locate faculty to serve as their committee members for purposes of the thesis or project. Most importantly, at least one of these faculty members must serve as a student’s Intellectual Graduate Mentor (IGM) (for more information on the function of the IGM see our Graduate Student Handbook, p. 10). It is crucial to identify this person as early in the program as possible. This assignment is intended to help students in this task.

Students are required each week to pick a different department in the college and spend a minimum of one hour reading through the web page of that department (none required on January 23, April 16, 23, or 30th). Students will then turn in a one page single spaced summary of the type of research and courses that can be found there. In addition, students should pick one article from one faculty member in that department to read that most interests them and provide a one paragraph annotation of that article. At the end of the semester, the student should have a summary of 10 departments and 10 annotations. These weekly summaries and annotations are due at the beginning of class and students may be asked to share what they learned that week with the class. Summaries and annotations will be graded each week as “excellent” (+), “satisfactory” (√), or “unsatisfactory” (-).

3. **Paper (100 points):** This 18-22 page paper must concern an issue central to this course. The issue should be analyzed vis-à-vis any of the perspectives we have discussed. Students will need to present a systematic analysis of their issue in terms of how it might better enable us to understand the intersections between key course concepts. The paper must present a fully developed research argument (a rubric will be provided), correctly follow APA style (or another if approved by the instructor), and have a minimum of grammatical or compositional errors. Students should begin their papers immediately and work closely with the instructor and with their peer group to discuss research strategies, resources, and drafts of the developing paper. Because part of the grade for the paper assignment includes the improvement of research practices, students are required to meet individually with the instructor every three weeks to discuss drafts of their paper and to work on their composition and research skills. With each meeting, students are expected to show signs of progress in their papers over
the previous meeting (this requirement is intended to help ease the workload that tends to become pushed to the end of the semester). The final paper is due on May 8. Late papers will not be accepted.

4. **Oral Presentation (100 points):** At the end of the semester students will present their research to the class in 15-20 minute formal presentations, including Powerpoint or other visual aids, as well as provide a quality, detailed outline to each student. Students must follow professional norms for presentations at conventions (i.e., extemporaneous delivery, competent communication practices—a rubric will be provided). The purpose of this assignment is to simulate the oral examination that students complete at the end of their program. Following the presentation (or punctuated throughout the presentation), there will be a 10-minute question and answer period in which the instructor and the class will engage the speaker on her/his research. In the past, many students have found it difficult to articulate themselves well under the pressure of the oral part of their comprehensive exams. Thus, take this component of the course very seriously. As professionals with a MSS or MH degree, you will be expected to think on your feet and to perform exceptionally well in face-to-face formal presentations.

5. **Final Exam (100 points):** The final take-home exam will consist of a series of questions with multiple parts, of which students will be required to answer one of the multi-part questions. Students will write a 5-7 page response. The exam will be made available to students on April 30 and will be due on May 7. (Sample exam questions appear on page 9 of this syllabus; I encourage you to use them for discussion in your peer groups.)

***Please note, students are encouraged to take any position on the course material and assignments they want and they will not be graded on their ideological/political/religious/racial/sexual or other points of view. I encourage students to stretch their critical thinking and arguing skills and to take challenges with their learning. I do, however, expect students to back up their beliefs/opinions/perspectives etc. with reasoned argument and evidence and to be committed, generally, to principles of free and open discussion and debate, tolerance, as well as civility and respect for others. This course will be driven by what students write and say so I need all of you to contribute freely and openly in as safe an environment as possible. I will do everything in my power to nurture such a supportive environment. Please see me if you have any suggestions on how to improve the classroom discussion environment or if something was said in class by myself or another student that upset you. I will treat your communications with me with the utmost confidentiality.***

**Grading System for Graduate Courses:**

As per the policy of the MHMSS program, the following are the definitions for each letter grade: A = Excellent; A- = Very good; B+ = Good; B = Satisfactory; B- = passing but below program expectations. **Grades below B- will not be counted toward the MSS or MH degree or any graduate certificate. As graduate students it is expected that you will do excellent work.**

A student’s final grade in this course will be generated according to the following scale:

- A= 500-475
- A- = 474-450
- B+ = 449-433
B = 432-416
B- = 415-400
C+ = 399-383
C = 382-366
C- = 365-350
D+ = 349-333
D = 332-316
D- = 315-300

Other Important Course Information:

Tardiness: Students who are going to be more than ten minutes late should call me earlier in the day to let me know their situation (i.e., bad weather, crisis at work). Excessive tardiness will result in a penalty for a student’s class participation grade.

Classroom policies: Cell phones should be turned off before coming to class. Laptop computers are to be used only for taking notes. Students who use them for other purposes (i.e., checking email, playing games, etc.) will be asked to turn off their computers.

CLAS Incomplete Policy: The faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences passed the following policy relating to the awarding of incomplete grades. This CLAS policy is consistent with the UCD campus policy. Incomplete grades “I” are NOT granted for low academic performance. To be eligible for an Incomplete grade, students MUST (1) successfully complete a minimum of 75% of the course, (2) have special circumstances beyond their control that preclude them from attending class and completing graded assignments, and (3) make arrangements to complete missing assignments with the original instructor. Verification of special circumstances is required. Completion of a CLAS Course Completion Agreement is strongly suggested. Incompletes cannot be awarded that stipulate (1) a student may repeat the entire course, (2) repeat or replace existing grades, (3) allow the student an indeterminate period of time to complete a course, or (4) allow the student to repeat the course with a different instructor. The CLAS Course Completion Agreement is available from the CLAS Advising Office, NC 2024.

Census Date: All students must be officially registered in this class by census date (see registration and academic deadlines at the end of this syllabus). Students who are not officially registered by this date will not be allowed to add the course. This are no exceptions to this college policy and is outside of the control of the instructor.

Disability Accommodations: The faculty at the University of Colorado system have both a legal and moral obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities. To be eligible for accommodations, students must be registered with the UCD Office of Disability Resources and Services (DRS) (Arts Building, Room 177; 303-556-33450, 303-556-4766 TDD). The DRS staff has experience to assist faculty in determining reasonable accommodations and to coordinate these accommodations. If a student is given accommodations, they must be followed. If a student chooses not to accept the accommodations set forth by the DRS, they MUST complete all assignments and do all course work in the same manner as all other students. No exceptions or alternate forms of evaluation can be used except those mandated by the DRS. Faculty cannot arbitrarily decide to give a student extra time, extra assistance or other forms of aid unless it is formally mandated by the DRS.

Religious Holiday Accommodations: Faculty in the University of Colorado system have both a legal and moral obligation to provide reasonable accommodations to students who must be absent from classes because of religious holidays. Faculty are expected to develop course-consistent accommodations for students who miss class
or graded assignments in order to observe religious holidays. Faculty are encouraged to (1) avoid examinations during major religious holidays and (2) ask students to privately identify all course conflicts at the beginning of the semester. For a list of such holidays, please consult http://www.interfaithcalendar.org.

Plagiarism Statement: Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated and can lead to possible dismissal from the University. At minimum, students who are caught cheating on an exam or plagiarizing a paper in this course will receive zero points for that assignment. At my discretion, a student caught cheating or plagiarizing a paper may be assigned an “F” for the course. Students are responsible for being attentive to, or observant of, campus policies about academic honesty as stated in the University’s Student Conduct Code. In addition, at the discretion of the Graduate Director, the student may be asked to leave the graduate program. Information regarding academic integrity can be found at http://thunder1.cudenver.edu/clas/AcademicIntegrity.htm. When in doubt ask! I am here to help you learn.

****COURSE SCHEDULE AND READINGS****

January 16: Martin Luther King Jr., Holiday No Class

PART I
PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES IN RESEARCH PRACTICES

January 23: Introduction to Paradigms and Arguments in Research and Scholarly Activity


January 30: Introduction to Paradigms and Arguments in Research and Scholarly Activity cont.


**February 6: Mindful Inquiry and Engaged Scholarship**


**PART II**

**PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES OF EDUCATION AND PEDAGOGY**

**February 13: Education, Pedagogy, and Institutions of Learning**


Note, on this evening we will be joined by Dr. Ellen Stevens, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology.

**February 20: Education, Pedagogy, and Institutions Cont.**


February 27: Education, Pedagogy, and Institutions Cont.


Part II Application:

PART III
CASE STUDIES OF THREE INTERDISCIPLINARY PHILOSOPHERS
(Rorty, Nietzsche, Foucault)

March 5: Poeticized and Foundationless Inquiry: Richard Rorty


March 12: Poeticized and Foundationless Inquiry cont.


March 19 Spring Break (no class)

March 26: Poeticized Inquiry: Friedrich Nietzsche

April 2: Poetry, Power, and the Present: Michel Foucault


April 9: Poetry, Power, and the Present cont.


PART IV
TYING IT ALL TOGETHER

April 16: Instructor’s Example

April 23: Oral presentation of Student Papers

April 30: Oral presentation of Student Papers

May 7: (Finals Week)
Take Home Final and Paper Due at 5 pm

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Sample Final Examination Questions

The following are representative of the types of questions we explore and represent part of the substantive knowledge for which you will be responsible in this course.

1. Thomas Kuhn grounds knowledge in what he calls a paradigm. What a discipline considers to be knowledge changes as the paradigms constituting them shift. If taken literally, Kuhn’s position seems to reject the notion that
the world can be understood ontologically. Does a rejection of a priori first principles support this view? Why or why not?

2. In political terms, Kuhn’s position may suggest that the status quo has no per se legitimacy, undermining the traditionalist view that certain power relationships are inherent in human nature. If taken literally, this position suggests that a critical anti-foundational epistemology has the potential to challenge conservative power structures. Critics of this position (i.e., progressive critics of postmodernism) claim that without an objective view of human social life or potential, there is no possibility for social justice. Therefore, such “cultural relativism” is morally debilitating. Explain and critique both sides of the two arguments.

3. Consider the following statement by philosopher Richard Rorty: “A humanistic discipline is in good shape only when it produces both inspiring works and works that contextualize, and thereby deromanticize and debunk, those inspiring works.” Discuss this quote while explaining: (1) the function of disciplines, with special emphasis on interdisciplinarity; and (2) the distinction between systemic and edifying scholarship, giving an example of each type drawn from your graduate school readings.

4. A major theme in this course involves the distinction between “systemic” and “critical” scholarship. What is meant by this distinction? What is the importance of this distinction? Where does it come from? What is its future? Is the distinction between these two types of scholarship useful? In what ways can academic freedom be said to be constrained by either of these models? Highlight the tensions that often exist between scholarship and politics, and between the academy and the larger society. In formulating your response, be sure to take into account specific literature found in your graduate study. Finally, make sure you include your own views and provide a reasoned discussion of them.

5. This course was meta-critical about education. What salient issues are evoked in the question of education? What are the various functions of graduate school education? Illustrate ways in which specific readings from your studies sheds light on the graduate school experience. Detail the ways in which the MHMSS program has influenced the manner in which you view education. Be sure to talk about both undergraduate and graduate school education, as well as the function of the educator. Make sure you include your own views on education and provide a reasoned discussion of them.

6. “Organizations such as disciplines and universities are political sites of power and control.” Write an essay to explain and substantiate this statement, especially as it relates to primary social identity groups in the United States. Within your response, address such topics as “relations of power,” ideology, discursive practices, hegemony, resistance, ideology of domination, micro-practices, hierarchy, and Foucault’s conception of discipline. Throughout your essay, indicate how and why interdisciplinarity is implicated in the issues you discuss.

Finally, below is general information from the college of which you need to be aware.
### Spring 2012 CLAS Academic Policies

The following policies pertain to all degree students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS).

- **Schedule verification**: It is each student’s responsibility to verify online that his/her official registration is correct: verify before classes begin and prior to the drop/add deadline. Failure to verify schedule accuracy is not sufficient reason to justify a late add or drop.

- **E-mail**: Students must activate and regularly check their official student e-mail account for CU Denver business: [http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/Pages/WebMail.aspx](http://www.ucdenver.edu/student-services/Pages/WebMail.aspx). Those who forward email must check CU Denver e-mail regularly for messages not automatically forwarded.

- **Waitlists**:
  - Students are not automatically notified if they are added to a class from a waitlist.
  - Students are not automatically dropped from a class if they never attended, stopped attending, or do not make tuition payments.
  - Waitlists are purged after the 1st week of classes, after which a paper Schedule Adjustment Form (drop/add form) is required. It is the student’s responsibility to get the form (online or at the Advising Office, NC 4002), have it signed, deliver it to the Registrar (Annex 100) or the Student Services Center (NC 1003), and verify her/his schedule online.

- **Late adds** (after 1 February) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late add are beyond the student’s control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. Petition forms are available in NC 4002. The signature of a faculty member on a Schedule Adjustment Form does not guarantee that a late add petition will be approved.

- **Late drops** (after 1 February) will be approved only when circumstances surrounding the late drop have arisen after the published drop deadline and are beyond the student’s control. This will require a written petition and verifiable documentation. The signature of a faculty member does not guarantee that a late drop petition will be approved.

- **Tuition**: Students are responsible for completing arrangements with financial aid, family, scholarships, etc. (depending on tuition plan selected) to pay their tuition prior to Census Date (1 February). Students who drop after that date are (1) financially responsible for tuition and fees, (2) academically responsible and will receive a "W" grade, and (3) are ineligible for a refund of COF hours or tuition.

- **Graduation**:
  - Undergraduate students wishing to graduate in spring 2012 must complete the online Intent to Graduate Form and meet with their academic advisor to obtain a graduation application. This application must be submitted by Census Date (1 February). You can obtain an application only after meeting with your advisor. There are no exceptions to this policy.
  - Graduate students wishing to graduate in spring semester 2012 must complete the online Intent to Graduate form and have a Request for Admissions to Candidacy on file with the CU Denver Graduate School (LSC 1251) no later than 5 PM, February 1, 2012.

### Important Dates and Deadlines

- **January 17, 2012**: First day of classes.
- **January 22, 2012**: Last day to add or waitlist a class using the UCDAccess student portal.
• **January 23, 2012**: Last day to drop without a $100 drop charge--this includes section changes.

• **January 24, 2012**: Waitlists are dropped. Students are no longer automatically added from a waitlist (and names not on the official course roster are not registered for the course). Adding a course now requires the completion of a Schedule Adjustment Form. This is the first day an instructor may approve a Schedule Adjustment Form to add a student to a closed course.

• **January 24 - February 1, 2012**: Students are responsible for verifying an accurate spring 2012 course schedule via the UCDAccess student portal. Students are not notified of their waitlist status by the University. All students must check their schedule prior to February 1 for accuracy.

• **February 1, 2012**: Census date.
  - **2/1/12, 5 PM**: Last day to add structured courses without a written petition for a late add. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such. This deadline does not apply to independent studies, internships, project hours, thesis hours, dissertation hours, and late-starting modular courses.
  - **2/1/12, 5 PM**: Last day to drop a spring 2012 course or completely withdraw from all spring 2012 courses using a Schedule Adjustment Form and still receive a tuition refund, minus the drop fee. After this date, tuition is forfeited and a "W" will appear on the transcript. This includes section changes. This is an absolute deadline and is treated as such.
  - **2/1/12, 5 PM**: Last day to apply for spring 2012 graduation. Undergraduates must make an appointment and see their academic advisor before this date to apply for graduation. Graduate students must complete the Intent to Graduate and Candidate for Degree forms.
  - **2/1/12, 5 PM**: Last day to request pass/fail or non-credit option for a course.
  - **2/1/12, 5 PM**: Last day to petition for a reduction in Ph.D. dissertation hours.

• **February 13-22, 2012**: Faculty can use the Early Alert system.

• **March 19-25, 2012**: Spring break (no classes/campus open).

• **April 2, 2012 at 5 PM**: Last day for non-CLAS students to drop or withdraw without a petition and special approval from the academic dean. After this date, a dean’s signature is required.

• **April 16, 2012 at 5 PM**: Last day for CLAS students to drop or withdraw with signatures from the faculty and dean but without a full petition. After this date, all schedule changes require a full petition. Petition forms are available in NC 4002 for undergraduates and LSC 1251 for graduates.

• **May 7 - 12, 2012**: Finals Week. No schedule changes will be granted once finals week has started. There are NO exceptions to this policy.

• **May 21, 2012**: Final grades available on UCDAccess (tentative).