Instructor: Dr. Daniela Vallega-Neu
Class meets MW 1800-1950 in 121 MCK
Office hours: Thursdays 2-4pm in SCH 245.

Gadamer’s Hermeneutics

Texts:
Required:

Recommended:

Prerequisites: junior standing

Course Description:
This course introduces Gadamer’s hermeneutics through a close reading of his major work *Truth and Method*, and also with consideration of later texts (see *The Gadamer Reader* and *Philosophical Hermeneutics*).
The course will consist in close reading and analysis along with discussions. We will focus on such concepts as “understanding,” “interpretation,” “truth,” “effective history,” “historically effective consciousness,” “dialogue,” and “language.” This will open discussions on a variety of subjects central to hermeneutics like the relevance of art, the finitude and historicality of all interpretation, the possibility and relevance of a genuine encounter with the past and with others, the dialogical character of understanding, and language as the medium of understanding.

Learning Outcomes
- Knowledge of Gadamer’s hermeneutics and his main work *Truth and Method*.
- Knowledge of historical influences and effects of Gadamer’s hermeneutics.
- Ability to think hermeneutically.
- Strengthened ability in close reading and analysis of texts.
- Strengthened ability to write conceptually clear and well structured philosophy papers.
Requirements:
1. Midterm paper (5-6 pages) 30% of the final grade.
2. Final term paper (6-9 pages) 50% of the final grade.
3. Attendance, participation, short writing assignments 20% of final grade

Regarding 1:
Your midterm paper will be mainly comprehensive and address what we discussed about Gadamer so far. You will be given guiding questions. The midterm paper may be used and expanded for the final paper.

Regarding 2:
The final paper (6-9 pages) should address Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* and any other of Gadamer’s essays that you wish to consider. The paper should be preferably exploratory such that you reflect more deeply on a central concept of Gadamer’s hermeneutics. You need to demonstrate the capacity of close reading and text analysis as well as the capacity to think hermeneutically.
You will be required to present a final paper proposal (one page) to class the last day of class.

Regarding 3:
You will receive participation points for valuable contributions to class discussion and short writing assignments. Participation points will be converted into grades at the end of the term.

Course Policies

1. **Handing in an assignment late** will lower your grade. Homework that is more than a week late will not be accepted, unless this was for demonstrable (documented) reasons beyond your control.

2. In order to **avoid disruptions** in class you are asked to avoid exiting and entering the classroom while lectures and discussions are going on.

3. **If you miss a class** it is your responsibility to keep up with the course material.

4. **The uses of electronic devices like** laptops, cell phones, iPods, iPads, Blackberries, etc. during class is **not allowed** unless you needs a specific device because of a disability. If the latter is the case, please let me know.

5. You are expected to follow the **rules of academic honesty**. Failure to do so will result in course failure (“F”).

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else’s product, words, ideas, or data as one’s own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one’s name on work submitted for credit, one certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. Verbatim statements by others must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from the regular text as indented extracts.
Students will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever: 1) one quotes another person’s actual words or replicates all or part of another’s product; 2) one uses another person’s ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one’s own words; 3) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226).

Fabrication: Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to: 1) citing information not taken from the source indicated; 2) listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise; 3) inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

Cheating: Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise. Examples include but are not limited to: 1) copying from another student’s work; 2) collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one’s work in a test situation; 3) using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4) using unauthorized material during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5) resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6) taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.

Grade Rubric:

A: Well written, clear, organized; no errors in comprehension, no major omissions in explanations, and evidence of independent thought or good criticisms.
B: Well written, mostly clear and organized; few errors in comprehension, some omissions in explanations, and evidence of some independent thought or passable criticisms.
C: Some general understanding of the material, but many errors in English, and often weak phrasing; or major omissions in explanations of the text and major errors in understanding the text; lack of order, and not enough understanding of the text for formulating relevant criticisms.
D: Faint understanding of the material, or lack of effort in understanding texts. Paper is either written in poor English, unclear, or disorganized, or it is way too short and sketchy.
F: Paper demonstrates no understanding of the material or misses completely the subject it was supposed to be about.
Week One
April 2: TM Part One, section I 3: “Retrieving the Question of artistic truth” (pp. 70-87).

Week Two
April 7: TM, part one, section II.1: “The Ontology of the Work of Art and Its Hermeneutic
Significance” (pp.102-130).
April 9: Continuation.

Week Three
April 14: TM, part two, section 4.1: “The elevation of the historicity of understanding to the
status of a hermeneutic principle.” (A) The hermeneutic circle and the problem of
prejudices (pp.268-278).
Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, sections 31 and 32.
April 16: TM, Part Two, section 4.1 (B) Prejudices as conditions of understanding (pp.278-306).

Week Four
April 21: TM, Part Two, section 4.2: “The recovery of the fundamental hermeneutic problem”
(pp.307-321).
April 23: TM, Part Two, section 4.3: “Analysis of historically effective consciousness”

Week Five
April 28: TM, Part Two, section 4.3. Continuation of last class (pp. 356-371).
April 30: TM, Part Three, section1: “Language as the medium of hermeneutic experience”
(pp.385-406).

Week Six:
May 5: TM, Part Three, section 2: “The development of the concept of language and the history
of western thought” (pp.406-417). MIDTERM PAPERS DUE!
May 7: TM, Part Three, section 2: “The development of the concept of language and the history
of western thought” (pp.418-436).

Week Seven
May 12: TM, Part Three, section 3: “Language as horizon of a hermeneutic ontology” (A) and
(B), pp. 436-468.
May 14: TM, Part Three, section 3 (C) The Universal Aspect of Hermeneutics. 468-481.
HOMEWORK for next week: Read the essay assigned for next week and bring to class two
questions you have regarding the essay. Questions should be interesting enough to spark a
conversation.
Week Eight
HOMEWORK for Wednesday: Read the essay assigned for next week and bring to class two questions you have regarding the essay. Questions should be interesting enough to spark a conversation.
HOMEWORK: Read the essay assigned for next week and bring to class two questions you have regarding the essay. Questions should be interesting enough to spark a conversation.

Week Nine
May 26: Memorial Day – NO CLASS
HOMEWORK: Read the essay assigned for next week and bring to class two questions you have regarding the essay. Questions should be interesting enough to spark a conversation.

Week Ten
June 4: Presentations of final paper proposals.

Final paper due Monday, June 9, before 4:00 pm.
Please email me your final paper. Send it in WORD format or PDF. Expect a reply from me. Consider your paper submitted only when I confirm that I received it!