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REINVENTING THE HUMANITIES IN THE FACE OF CONTEMPORARY CRISES

Summary

This course is meant to introduce major areas of interest in modern humanities as a field attempting to redefine itself in the face of major challenges arising from the recent pandemic, ecological crises, and the impact of technology. Special emphasis is placed on the role that the humanities can play in understanding and navigating problems that span many domains, e.g. climate change or global inequality, and the potential within the humanities to develop tools for connecting and mapping vast areas of knowledge and practice. The course also aims to reconsider the meaning of categories such as gender, class, and race in the light of new theory and geopolitics. Finally, due attention is devoted to the reconsideration of the meaning of “the human” in the humanities through the lens of posthumanism and various studies of the Anthropocene that develop novel frameworks for ethical and conscious becoming.

Topics

1. Introduction and overview of the course. Twenty-first century challenges facing civilization and the struggle in the humanities to redefine itself as a field
2. What world after the pandemic? The virus as a potential catalyst of change at the level of individuals, society, and civilization
3. What happened to public intellectuals and public debate? On the role of humanities in the era of research specialization, social media, fake news, and the crisis of universities
4. Who are the humans of the humanities? Rethinking individualism, identity, and agency in the Anthropocene through non-anthropocentric ontologies
5. What can the humanities do about climate change? On the role of imagination in conceptualizing current ecological crises
6. Why are we stuck in a spectacle of our own past? Hauntology, nostalgia, and retromania in popular culture; remediation, technological capture and the paradoxes of creativity
7. Do we all work for social media companies? Cognitive capitalism and the redefinition of work and class within global capitalism and new media environments
8. How has colonialism shaped modern culture? Necropolitics and the postcolony; the place of the other in the world marked by intense globalization and migration
9. Why do we need another wave of feminism? On transversality, sexual politics, and the role of gender studies today
10. Summary of the course. Final test or interviews