

PHI 8119: Phenomenology and Existentialism

Winter 2016

Wednesdays, 4:30-7:30 p.m., 440 JORG

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Course Description:

This course will explore developments in thinking the nature of selfhood from Husserl, through Merleau-Ponty, to Deleuze.

Husserl argues, in the *Cartesian Meditations*, that Descartes was right about what philosophy requires: a presuppositionless or prejudice-free beginning. But Descartes failed in his own project: he presupposed a world outside of the subject, and that the subject is a “thinking thing;” and he thereby becomes ensnared in an account of consciousness that makes it fundamentally solipsistic. Husserl aims to take up Descartes’ project, and to radicalize it by avoiding these errors. The result is phenomenological method, transcendental idealism, and the revelation of an “I” that is not a thing, but a power of meaning-constitution that is (a) fundamentally open to otherness, and (b) itself informed by syntheses of meaning in relation to which it is passive.

Merleau-Ponty can, in turn, be read as a deepening of Husserl’s phenomenological project. Already in Husserl, we find an effort to think a form of idealism that is not solipsistic, and where the “transcendental ego” is not simply the creator of meaning. Merleau-Ponty takes this further by elaborating Husserl’s understanding of embodiment and intersubjectivity, and by exploring the ways in which the self or “I” is *expressively enacted* through its assumption of powers of meaning-institution that exceed it—for instance language, the body, and expressive others.

Deleuze claims to be critical of phenomenology, and in particular of its focus on consciousness and unity or identity. His emphasis (in his own writing and in his books written with Guattari—one of which we will read from) is instead on materialism and difference or non-identity. And yet, if we read carefully, we will find that Deleuze helps us take note of the materialism and difference central to Merleau-Ponty’s thought; and we will find that Merleau-Ponty’s account of the self as expressively enacted through what exceeds it is very much akin to Deleuze’s and Guattari’s account of a person’s becoming.

Texts:

The following texts are available at the Ryerson University Bookstore (105 Bond St.). Please be certain to purchase the translations that I have listed here.

REQUIRED

- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations*. Translated by Dorion Cairns. Martinus Nijhoff Pub.
- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Translated by Donald Landes. Routledge, 2013.
- Deleuze and Guattari. *Anti-Oedipus*. Penguin Classics, 2009.

RECOMMENDED:

- For those new to phenomenology:
 - Sokolowski. *Introduction to Phenomenology*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000. [emphasis on Husserl]
 - Luijpen and Koren. *A First Introduction to Existential Phenomenology*. Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1969. [emphasis on post-Husserlian phenomenologists]
- For those wanting to improve their writing:
 - Elbow, Peter, *Writing without Teachers*, Oxford University Press [on the process of excellent writing]
 - Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*, Allyn & Bacon [on essential grammatical issues]
 - Baker, Sheridan, *The Practical Stylist*, Longman [on structural issues]

Assignments and Grade Breakdown:

Details about the assignments are on the syllabus, after the reading schedule, and will be discussed in class.

- 20% **Participation**
This participation grade will be divided up into two parts.
 - 10% For constructive contributions to class discussions—contributions, that is, respond responsibly to the conversation underway.
 - 10% For posting five “Highlights,” each worth 2% each, each posted on days you are NOT handing in a short explication paper. See below for details.
- 39% **Three Short Explication Papers**
Three short papers, approximately one page single-spaced. Worth 13% each. See below for details. Sign up in advance for the weeks in which you will submit these papers. Each paper will be submitted before we discuss the text in question in class, at noon on that Wednesday.
- 5% **Final Paper Proposal**
See below for details. Due *as soon as you have a paper idea*, April 15 at the latest.
- 36% **Final Paper with Abstract**
A 12 page (conference length) paper, double-spaced, accompanied by an abstract (250 words). Due April 30.

Tentative Reading Schedule:

Date	Assigned Readings	Focus	Recommended Secondary Readings
HUSSERL			
Wed. Jan. 20	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • First Meditation • Second Meditation, but leave out §16, and pp.48-55 inclusive. [45 pp.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The phenomenological project: what is it? (radicalizing Descartes’ project) • The phenomenological <i>epoché</i> • The difference between psychological and transcendental reflection • Intentionality; <i>cogito</i> and <i>cogitatum</i> (and <i>noetic</i> and <i>noematic</i> description) • Horizons • Synthesis and the constitution of objective unities 	
Wed. Jan. 27	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third Meditation, §§24, 26, 28 • Fourth Meditation, §§30-34, 38, 40-41 [~20pp.]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transcendental ego • habit • The method of eidetic intuition • How to understand “transcendental idealism” 	
Wed. Feb. 3	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fifth Meditation [§§42-44, 47-48, 50-55] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The problem of experiencing someone else • The role of the body and behaviour 	SCHOLARLY ARTICLES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costello, Peter. “Chapter 2: Intersubjectivity.” <i>Layers in Husserl’s Phenomenology: On Meaning and Intersubjectivity</i>. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. • Sheets-Johnstone, Maxine (1999). Re-thinking Husserl’s fifth meditation. <i>Philosophy Today</i> 43

			<p>(4):99-106.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Haney, K. (2002). The role of intersubjectivity and empathy in Husserl's foundational project. <i>Analecta Husserliana</i> 80:146-157. <p>PHENOMENOLOGY IN PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guenther. "Subjects Without a World? An Husserlian Analysis of Solitary Confinement." <i>Human Studies</i>, (2011) 34:257-276. Haney, K. <i>Intersubjectivity Revisited: Phenomenology and the Other</i>. Ohio University Press, 1994.
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MERLEAU-PONTY

Wed. Feb. 10	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Introduction to Part One" (69-74); "The Body as an Object and Mechanistic Physiology" (75-91); "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motricity: sections a, k, l, m" (100-105, 139-148); "The Synthesis of One's Own Body: section c" (153-155) <p>[37 pp.]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The phantom limb—how should we understand it? What does it reveal about human existence more generally? Habit—how should we understand it? Note how it transforms lived space, perception, and one's own sense of possibility. 	<p>PHENOMENOLOGY IN PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young, Iris Marion. "Throwing Like a Girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Bodily Compartment, Motility and Spatiality." <i>Human Studies</i> 3 (1980): 137-156. Leder, Drew (1992). A tale of two bodies: the Cartesian corpse and the lived body. In <i>The Body in Medical Thought and Practice</i>. Kluwer 17-35. [if this is difficult to get, ask me for it] Gallagher, Shaun. "Pursuing a Phantom" in <i>How the Body Shapes the Mind</i> Toombs, S. Kay. "Illness and the Paradigm of the Lived Body." <i>Theoretical Medicine</i> 9 (1988): 201-226 <p>SCHOLARLY ARTICLES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talero, Maria. "Merleau-Ponty and the Bodily Subject of Learning." <i>International Philosophical Quarterly</i> 46 (2006): 191-205. Marratto, Scott. "Chapter 1 – Situation and the Embodied Mind" in <i>The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity</i>, SUNY Press, 2013.
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Reading Week

Wed. Feb. 24	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> "The Body as Expression, and Speech" (179-205) <p>[26pp.]</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The distinction between first-order (or originary, authentic, speaking) speech, and second-order (or constituted, spoken) speech "speech does not translate a ready-made thought; rather, speech accomplishes thought" (183) 	<p>SCHOLARLY ARTICLES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waldenfels, Bernard. "The Paradox of Expression." In <i>Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty's Notion of Flesh</i>, edited by Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, 89-102. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000. Landes, Don. "Chapter 3 – Expression and <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>" in <i>Merleau-Ponty and the Paradoxes of Expression</i>, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Russon, John. "The Impossibilities of the I: Self, Memory and Language in Merleau-Ponty and Derrida," in <i>Time, Memory, Institution: Merleau-Ponty's New Ontology of Self</i>, edited by David Morris and Kym Maclaren, Ohio University Press, 2014.
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Tues.			
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Mar. 1	<i>Department Colloquium with Phenomenological Psychologist Eva Maria Simms [sadly cancelled]</i>		
Wed. Mar. 2	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception.</i></p> <p>Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Others and the Human World” (361-383) <p>Recommended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The Body as a Sexed Being” (156-174) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The notion of “coexistence” • “solitude and communication are two sides of the same phenomenon” • The social world: what is it? 	<p>PHENOMENOLOGY IN PRACTICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simms, Eva. “Intimacy and the face of the other: A philosophical study of infant institutionalization and deprivation.” <i>Emotion, Space and Society</i> 13 (2014): 80-86 • Verhage, Florentien. “Living With(out) Borders: Oppression as Intimate Experience,” <i>Emotion Space and Society</i> 11 (2014): 96-105. Reprinted in <i>Intimacy and Embodiment</i>, a special issue of <i>Emotion, Space and Society</i> 13 (2014): 111–120. • Jacobson, Kirsten. “The Experience of Home and the Space of Citizenship.” <i>The Southern Journal of Philosophy</i> 48(3) (2010): 219-245. • Maclaren, Kym. “Embodied Perceptions of Others as a Condition of Selfhood? Empirical and Phenomenological Considerations.” <i>Journal of Consciousness Studies</i>, Vol. 15, No. 8 (August 2008): 63-93.
Wed. Mar. 9	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sensing” (214-252) [38pp.] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Note the distinction between the natural, pre-personal self (or selves), and the personal agent • Section c: “Consciousness ensnared in the sensible” 	
Tues. Mar. 15	<i>Department Colloquium with Kirsten Jacobson</i>		
Wed. Mar. 16	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Space” (253-265, 293-311) • “The Thing and the Natural World” --TBA 		<p>SCHOLARLY ARTICLES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russon, John. “The Spatiality of Self-Consciousness: Originary Passivity in Kant, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida.” <i>Chiasmi International</i>, 9 (2007): 219-232.
Wed. Mar. 23	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Cogito” (387-431) [44pp.] 		<p>SCHOLARLY ARTICLES:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marratto, Scott. “Chapter 5: Ipseity and Language” in <i>The Intercorporeal Self: Merleau-Ponty on Subjectivity</i>, SUNY Press, 2013. • Hass and Hass. “Merleau-Ponty and the Origin of Geometry.” In <i>Chiasms: Merleau-Ponty’s Notion of Flesh</i>, edited by Fred Evans and Leonard Lawlor, 177-189. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
Wed. Mar. 30	<p><i>Phenomenology of Perception.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Freedom” (458-483) [25 pp.] 		
Wed. Apr.	<p><i>Anti-Oedipus.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chapter 1, sections 		

6	1-3 (pp. 1-22)		
Wed. Apr. 13	<i>Anti-Oedipus.</i> • Chapter 2, sections 3-5, with a selection from section 6 (pp. 68-105 and 109-111)		
April 15	Paper Proposal Due On or Preferably Before This Date		
April 30	Final Paper Due		

Written Assignments:

- **Highlights**

On five different weeks when you are NOT handing in a short paper, you are required to submit a “Highlight” to the discussion board that I will set up on Brightspace. You must submit it before noon on Wednesday. The highlight will concern the reading that we will be discussing that Wednesday afternoon. Each submission is worth 2%. Each submission should be 300 words or less.

A “Highlight” highlights for us something about the text that is in itself interesting, that has interesting implications, that raises an interesting question, or that begs to be thought about further. The task is to articulate in very precise, informative, rich, but also concise ways what it is that the text is saying, and why it is of interest. You should be aiming to take up *key* ideas, claims or arguments from the text, rather than focusing on marginal issues. Your highlight could do any of the following (among other possibilities):

- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and explain how this offers new insight into the issue in question.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and articulate a question of clarification.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and describe an interesting implication that it seems to have.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and name an interesting assumption that seems to be involved.
- Articulate two claims made in the text (so that it is clear to us what you think they mean), and tell us how you think there is a tension between those two claims.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and state how it seems to you in tension with something in your experience.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and point out an interesting connection between it and a claim made in a previous reading for the course.
- Articulate a key claim made in the text in your own words (so that it is clear to us what you think it means), and propose an interesting research project or paper topic based on it.

The “Highlight” that you post should be written in full sentences, and aim at explication of the text, responsible communication, and being articulated in your own voice. My hope is that, by reading each others’ highlights, we will become more deeply attuned to the richness, complexity and significance of the text. I expect that having to write them will also help us all read the texts thoughtfully, and articulate for ourselves our own thoughts.

- **Three Short Papers**

Three short papers, approximately one page single-spaced. Worth 12% each. See below for details. Sign up in advance for the weeks in which you will submit these papers. Each paper will be submitted before we discuss the text in question in class, at noon on that Wednesday

Until you have received an A on these papers: In each paper, you should choose a key idea or claim made in the day’s reading, and explicate it. That is to say, you should teach your reader (and probably, through teaching your reader, teach yourself) what the key point is, and the line of reasoning that the text uses to make that point. Include page references, but keep quotations to an absolute minimum (none at all is often good). This is your opportunity to give your reader insight into the author’s ideas, but by using your own voice.

If you are having difficulty settling on a key idea or claim to write about, consult with me.

After you have received an A on one of these papers: you are invited to write the paper in a way that raises a question, proposes an interesting implication, spells out an interesting assumption, suggests a research project (with its rationale)... etc. But these papers, too, will need to be substantially devoted to an explication of the text, so that we can understand the question, implication, assumption, etc. that you are pointing out.

- **Final Paper Proposal**

Worth 5% of your grade. Your proposal should consist of an introductory paragraph, introducing the problem you intend to address, and your thesis in response to it; an outline of the sections you foresee, each articulated in terms of the point or subthesis that the section will make. Due *as soon as you have a paper idea*, or April 15 at the latest. [**Important Note:** your final paper may differ greatly from your proposal, since one's thinking can be and even should be transformed as one writes. This exercise is thus not for the sake of setting in stone your paper topic, but rather to ensure, before you write your final paper, that you have developed your chops well when it comes to articulating a problem, formulating a precise, informative and rich thesis statement, and structuring your paper.]

- **One Conference Length Paper with Abstract**

A 12-page paper, double-spaced, accompanied by an abstract (250 words). Due April 30. Worth 34%.

You are expected to develop your own topic for this paper. You are encouraged, however, to consult with me about it. I have also included supplementary secondary readings that illustrate, in different ways, how one might write an excellent paper in phenomenology.

I will give you more details about how to write an abstract for a paper.

Policies:

Assignment Deadline Extensions:

Extensions for deadlines can usually be granted if you are facing difficult circumstances of some sort. It is crucial, however, that you contact me (by phone, on email or in person) and ask for such an extension *before the due-date arrives*. In cases where it is impossible to contact me before the deadline, you should have documentation to support your request for an extension.

Extensions will not be given, except under the gravest of circumstances, for the Three Short Papers or Highlights, since these are designed to set up class discussions.

Late Policy:

Assignments handed in late will be docked 3% for each day late.

Changes to the Syllabus:

I reserve the right to make changes to the syllabus—both to the time schedule and to the content—in case these are required. All changes made will be for the good of the class, and will be noted in writing (on paper or on the web site for the course).