

PHIL 596: History of Phenomenology

“Nothing determines me from outside, not because nothing acts upon me, but, on the contrary, because I am from the start outside myself and open to the world.”

— Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 1945

Course Description

Phenomenology is the systematic study of the way we experience the world. As a way of studying philosophy, phenomenology can be a powerful tool for thinking about many important questions in our lives. When we ask philosophical questions, we can gain many surprising insights if we put aside our assumptions and preconceptions and simply pay close attention to our actual lived experience. This means that phenomenologists strive to put away all metaphysical doctrines and dogmas to catch sight of how we are with *things*. The cornerstone of phenomenological analysis is the concept of “intentionality,” which posits that consciousness is always “consciousness of” something. Phenomenology eschews the psychological terminology of brain states and neurological firings, as well as the epistemological language of representation, in lieu of a language that gives the world back to consciousness in a direct manner—i.e. things instead intimately belong to embodied consciousness in their modes of ‘presentation’ or ‘unveiling’. In other words, we *have* them as they *are*. “Wir wollen auf die ‘Sachen selbst’ zurückgehen” (We must go back to the things themselves.) is known as Edmund Husserl’s foundational slogan of the phenomenological tradition. This tradition, which includes Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, has followed this slogan in developing careful descriptions of the structure of our lived experience as embodied subjects.

This course inspired by HUM 460 (Seminar in Interdisciplinary Humanities: The Body in Philosophy and Culture) in Spring 2020 engages historical and contemporary approaches to the phenomenological method, which is a critical methodological strain in post-Kantian philosophy described first and most eloquently by Husserl as: “to the things themselves!” In this independent study, I will explore the development of phenomenology from the writings of its founder, Edmund Husserl, to other major thinkers such as Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jacques Derrida. This will be accomplished through a careful examination of representative primary texts, which will help me to understand the nature and method of “phenomenological philosophy.”

Learning Outcomes

- Articulate and illustrate some of the central concepts in the history of phenomenology.
- Identify and evaluate some ways that contemporary philosophers have applied phenomenological analysis to a variety of important real-world topics.
- Conduct phenomenological analysis of an intriguing issue, in order to illuminate important features that may otherwise be overlooked.
- Formulate phenomenological arguments soundly and persuasively, support those arguments with independent research, and present them in both written and online, multi-media formats.

Research Expectations & Evaluation Dimension

- Three short reflection papers, worth a total of **30%** of the final grade. Papers will be approximately 1200-1500 words (4-5 pages). Reflection papers may vary in style but are generally required to include a thesis statement in the first paragraph, of which the rest of the paper is an attempt to demonstrate, making use of assigned and optional texts.
- Build a website (**20%** of the final grade) to showcase your progress and outcomes of this independent study, including at least three book reviews (>250 words), and a wiki page includes your collected resources of related topics in this independent study.
- Create one creative project, worth a total of **50%** of the final grade concerning phenomenology to address your understanding of these topics discussed during this independent work. Although the form of this creative project is flexible, this process will require the organization of production elements, the acquisition of media, and the creation of the finished project. The detailed requirement and evaluation criteria of this creative project will be in accordance with the guidance from the independent director.

Communication Plan

Bi-weekly meeting with the director is required while weekly meeting is recommended.

Tentative Reading Schedule

Week One (Aug. 24) - **Background: Why is Phenomenology Necessary?**

- Lester Embree, *The Golden Age of Phenomenology at the New School for Social*

Research, 1954-1973, Introduction, pp. 1-39

- Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Ch 1 & 2
- Don Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, Ch 1
- “Rationalism vs. Empiricism”: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rationalism-empiricism/>
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations 1, 2 & 3

Week Two (Aug. 31) - **Conceptual & Historical Background to the Problem**

- Locke, *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, selections
- “Kant’s Transcendental Idealism” (omit §§ 2 and 4):
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-transcendental-idealism/>
- Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface A and Doctrine of the Elements Pt. II. Div. I. Bk. I. Ch II

Week Three (Sep. 7, Labor Day) - **Brentano: Descriptive Psychology & Psychic Phenomena**

- Dermot Moran, *The Phenomenology Reader*, “Editor’s Introduction”, pp.1-16
- Brentano, “The Distinction Between Mental and Physical Phenomena”, §§ 1-5 pp. 35-42
- (top), §9, pp. 46-48
- Brentano, “Descriptive Psychology of Descriptive Phenomenology”, pp. 51-54
- Dan Zahavi, *Husserl’s Phenomenology*, Ch 1
- Husserl, “Consciousness as Intentional Experience”, §§9-14, pp. 78-88, Appendix to §11
- and §20, pp. 104-106
- Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Ch 4

Week Four (Sep. 14) - **Husserl: The Noetic Act & Lebenswelt**

- Husserl, “Introduction to the Logical Investigations”, §3, pp. 69-71
- Husserl, “Pure Phenomenology, its Method, and its Field of Investigation”, pp. 124-133
- Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Ch 7
- Ihde, *Experimental Phenomenology*, Ch 2
- Dagfin Føllesdal, “The Lebenswelt in Husserl”, pp. 27-45

Week Five (Sep. 21) - **Heidegger: Fundamental Ontology & Being-in-the-World**

- Moran, “Martin Heidegger’s Transformation of Phenomenology”
- Heidegger, “The Fundamental Discoveries of Phenomenology”, §5a, pp. 257-260, and §§5c-6, pp. 264-277 (omit §5b)

- Heidegger, “The Phenomenological Method of Investigation”, pp. 278-287

Week Six (Sep. 28) (Reflection Paper #1 Due) - **Heidegger & Arendt: Publicness & the World**

- Hubert Dreyfus, Being-in-the-World, “Worldliness”, pp. 88-107 Heidegger, “The Worldhood of the World,” pp. 288-307
- Heidegger, *Being and Time*, “The Dasein-with of Others and Everyday Being-with”, pp. 110-118
- Arendt: “What is Existenz Philosophy?”, pp. 345-361

Week Seven (Oct. 5) - **Sartre: Existentialism & Phenomenology**

- “Jean-Paul Sartre” (§§ 1-4): <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sartre/>
- Sartre, *Basic Writings*, selections
- Sartre, “Bad Faith”, pp. 408-420

Week Eight (Oct. 12) - **Merleau-Ponty: Embodied Phenomenology & Perception**

- Merleau-Ponty, “The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology”, pp. 427-435 Scott E. Weiner, “Inhabiting the Phenomenology of Perception”
- Merleau-Ponty, “The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences”, pp. 436-448
- John Russon, “Freedom and Passivity: Work, Attention, Language”, pp. 25-39

Week Nine (Oct. 19) - **Levinas & Derrida: Otherness & Deconstruction**

- Levinas, “Ethics and the Face”, pp. 515-528
- Levinas & Richard Kearney, “Dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas”, pp. 13-33
- Derrida, “Différance”, pp. 555-572
- Rudolphe Gasché, “The Exercise of Deconstruction”, pp. 209-211
- François Raffoul, “Deconstruction as Aporetic Thinking”, pp. 286-288

Week Ten (Oct. 26) (Reflection Paper #2 Due) - **Body and Gender**

- Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, Introduction
- Beauvoir, “Women's Situation and Character”, pp. 486-507
- Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like A Girl”
- Sara Ahmed, “The Feminist Killjoy”

Week Eleven (Nov. 1) - **Disability & Different Abilities**

- Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, Introduction
- Rosemarie Garland-Thompson, “Misfits: A Feminist Materialist Disability Concept” *Hypatia*, pp. 591-609

Week Twelve (Nov. 9) - **Race & Colonial Structures of Experience**

- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Chapter 5, “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” pp. 89-119
- Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its Afterlives*, Introduction, Ch3, “The Racialization of Criminality and the Criminalization of Race”, and Ch5, “Living Relationality”, pp. 101-123

Week Thirteen (Nov. 16) - **Experiencing Animals & the Phenomenology of the Non-Human**

- Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, pp. 192-200
- Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Animal and Man*, pp. 29-47
- Jean-Christophe Bailly, *The Animal Side*, pp. 1-22
- Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, pp. 1-29

Week Fourteen (Reflection Paper #3 Due) (Nov. 23, **Thanksgiving Holiday**)

Week Fifteen (Nov. 30) - **Phenomenology of Place**

- Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place*, Chapters 6 & 7
- Heidegger, Poetry, Language, Thought, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking”

Week Sixteen (Dec. 7) - **Merleau-Ponty: The Visible and the Invisible**

- Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, The Chiasm, pp. 248- 270
- Yacavone, Daniel. “Film and the Phenomenology of Art: Reappraising Merleau-Ponty on Cinema as Form, Medium, and Expression.” *New Literary History*, vol. 47 no. 1, 2016, p. 159-185. *Project MUSE*, doi:10.1353/nlh.2016.0001.

Week Seventeen (Dec. 14) (Final Creative Project Due) - **Research Project Presentation**

Reliable Secondary Sources

Overviews of Phenomenology and Existential Phenomenology

- David Cerbone, *Understanding Phenomenology*
- David E. Cooper, *Existentialism*
- Dermot Moran, *Phenomenology*
- Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney, eds., *The Phenomenology Reader*
- Jon Stewart, *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*
- Simon Glendinning, *In the Name of Phenomenology*

Edmund Husserl

- Aron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology*
- Dan Zahavi, *Husserl*
- Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*
- Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*
- R. Bernet, I. Kern, and E. Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*

Jean-Paul Sartre

- Christina Howells ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*
- Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre*
- Katherine J. Morris, *Sartre*
- Sebastian Gardner, *Sartre's Being and Nothingness*

Maurice Merleau-Ponty

- Eric Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*
- Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*
- Taylor Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*
- Taylor Carmen ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*

Secondary Online Sources

- <https://www.iep.utm.edu/phenom/>
- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>
- <http://www.spep.org/resources/online-resources/>
- <https://www.phenomenologyonline.com>
- <https://philpapers.org>
- <http://www.husserlpage.com>
- <https://ophen.org/>
- <https://litguide.press.jhu.edu/index.html>
- <https://guides.library.duq.edu/phenomenology>
- <https://www3.nd.edu/~jspeaks/old/resourcesindex.htm>
- <http://www.sophia-project.org/philosophy-resources.html>