

Instructor: Dr. Ted Toadvine (tat30@psu.edu)
Office Hours: Thursdays, 12:00 - 2:00 pm and by appointment, 127 Sparks Building
Phone: 814-867-0471 (office)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The core of our course will be a complete reading of Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, the work for which he was best known during his lifetime and that established him as the leading phenomenologist of his generation. Here Merleau-Ponty develops his distinctive interpretation of phenomenology's method in conversation with Gestalt theory and research in psychology and neurology. Framing his inquiry with a parallel critique of empiricism and intellectualism for their unquestioned commitment to a ready-made, objective world, Merleau-Ponty emphasizes the essentially embodied, expressive, and historical aspects of perceptual experience across a wide range of existential dimensions, including sexuality, language, space, nature, intersubjectivity, time, and freedom. We will situate *Phenomenology of Perception* in the wider context of Merleau-Ponty's oeuvre, explore his relationship with major interlocutors, and also consider his influence on the burgeoning field of critical phenomenology.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

Students who successfully complete this course are expected to have gained the ability to:

- Articulate a detailed understanding of Merleau-Ponty's overall philosophical project, method, and major concepts as these are developed in his masterpiece, *Phenomenology of Perception*
- Produce and evaluate close-readings of Merleau-Ponty's text to clarify, deepen comprehension of, and critically assess his methods, arguments, and philosophical position
- Situate Merleau-Ponty's thought in the context of the phenomenological tradition and in relation to contemporary interlocutors and subsequent critics
- Present and assess interpretations of Merleau-Ponty's work in light of contemporary philosophical themes and developments
- Demonstrate advanced conceptual thinking, reading, and writing skills appropriate to the study of major texts of contemporary philosophy
- Produce high-quality, original scholarly research appropriate to graduate-level study in philosophy

COURSE MATERIALS:

Please bring assigned texts to class. You are also encouraged to consult the original French of PhP. The following texts are available at the PSU Bookstore. All other reading selections will be posted on Canvas.

- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (Routledge, 2012).
- Merleau-Ponty, *Phénoménologie de la perception* (Gallimard, 1945; 2013 printing).

Please note that multiple editions of both the English and the French text are widely available, and that these editions often differ markedly in content as well as pagination. Please do your best to obtain the current editions of the text so that we are all on the same page, literally and figuratively.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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| 1. participation | 10% |
| 2. term paper prospectus & annotated bibliography | 20% |
| 3. final term paper, 14-16 pages | 70% |

- **Participation/attendance:** You are expected to participate actively in this course, which includes attending every class, reading all assigned material prior to class, and participating productively and professionally in class discussions. The quality and quantity of your participation in the class discussion will be evaluated in assigning 10% of your final grade. Absences from class will negatively affect your participation grade.
- **Term paper prospectus & bibliography:** Please submit, in the 14th week, a prospectus of your final paper with two components: (1) a 2-3 page detailed description of the topic and outline of your proposed argument (comparable

to a proposal for a conference presentation); and (2) an annotated bibliography of at least five peer-reviewed secondary texts you intend to consult. Each annotation should be around one double-spaced page and include a summary of the article as well as an indication of its relevance for your project. Please submit your prospectus and bibliography electronically in a standard format (.doc, .pdf). Your prospectus must receive my approval in order for your final term paper to be accepted. The prospectus will be worth 20% of your final course grade.

- **Final term paper:** Final term papers will be treated as the final examination for the course and are due one week after the last class meeting. These papers should explore in detail a specific independently-chosen topic or theme related to the course and must include (a) examination of at least five scholarly secondary sources in addition to primary texts, and (b) the development of your own original position or critical response. Term papers should be 14-16 double-spaced pages (typical conference length) and must be proof-read and use a standard system of citation (preferably Chicago style). Please submit essays electronically in a standard format (.doc, .pdf). If you anticipate the need for an extension, please discuss arrangements for this with me well in advance. Otherwise, papers received after the deadline will be penalized at my discretion. Your term paper will count for 70% of your final course grade.
- **Course Grading Scale:** Final course grades will be assigned according to the following scale. Grades will not be adjusted to fit a standard distribution curve, nor will “close” grades be rounded to a higher grade.

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| A | 93% and above |
| A- | 90% or higher but below 93% |
| B+ | 87% or higher but below 90% |
| B | 83% or higher but below 87% |
| B- | 80% or higher but below 83% |
| C+ | 77% or higher but below 80% |
| C | 73% or higher but below 77% |
| C- | 70% or higher but below 73% |
| D | 60% or higher but below 70% |
| F | below 60% |

COURSE POLICIES & UNIVERSITY STATEMENTS

• **COVID-19 Statement**

We know from existing data that wearing a mask in public can help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the community (Lyu & Wehby, 2020; CDC, 2020; Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2020). In accordance with PA Department of Health regulations and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), The Pennsylvania State University has determined that everyone will be required to wear a face mask in university buildings, including classrooms. You MUST wear a mask appropriately (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. Masks have been provided for students, instructors, and staff, and everyone is expected to wear one.

Students who choose not to wear a mask may not attend class in person. Students in this situation should not expect that they can complete this class remotely and may need to drop this course as this course requires in-person participation. This is to protect their health and safety as well as the health and safety of their classmates, instructor, and the university community. Anyone attending class in person without a mask will be asked to put one on or leave. Instructors will end class if anyone present refuses to appropriately wear a mask for the duration of class. Students who refuse to wear masks appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements may face disciplinary action for Code of Conduct violations.

On a case-by-case basis, students may consult with Student Disability Resources for accommodations if they cannot wear a mask. Students requiring such accommodations may be advised to take advantage of and participate in the course through synchronous remote learning, if available. Students requiring such accommodations should consult with academic advisors before the end of the drop/add period to locate alternative course offerings that will allow their participation through remote learning.

Finally, students who are experiencing COVID-19 related symptoms should not attend class in person and are encouraged to contact a health care provider.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020, April 3) Recommendation Regarding the Use of Cloth Face Coverings, Especially in Areas of Significant Community-Based Transmission.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html>

Johns Hopkins Medicine. (2020, June 17) Coronavirus Face Masks & Protection FAQs.

<https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/coronavirus-face-masks-what-you-need-to-know>

Lyu, W. and Wehby, G.L. (2020, June 16) Community Use Of Face Masks And COVID-19: Evidence From A Natural Experiment Of State Mandates In The US. *Health Affairs*.

https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00818?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Acoresearcher.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub++0pubmed&

- **Incompletes and extensions** will be given only in the event of documented illness or emergencies.
- **Computers and other electronic equipment:** Use of electronic equipment, including cell phones, tablets, and laptop computers, is prohibited during this class. Exceptions to the prohibition of tablets/laptops may be requested from the instructor and will be granted only for legitimate academic reasons. Use of computers for academic reasons will be monitored throughout the term, and failure to restrict their use to this function will result in the revocation of any computer privileges.
- **Inclement Weather:** It is generally expected that class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. If, however, it becomes necessary to cancel class while the University remains open, this will be announced on Canvas and through the Canvas email system.
- **Academic Integrity:** Academic integrity is the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest, and responsible manner. Academic integrity is a basic guiding principle for all academic activity at The Pennsylvania State University, and all members of the University community are expected to act in accordance with this principle. Consistent with this expectation, the University's Code of Conduct states that all students should act with personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights, and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts.

Academic integrity includes a commitment by all members of the University community not to engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation, or deception. Such acts of dishonesty violate the fundamental ethical principles of the University community and compromise the worth of work completed by others.

Please review and familiarize yourself with the Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity policies. In accordance with these policies, violations of academic integrity will be met with disciplinary action consistent with the offense, ranging from a warning to failure of the course.

- University Code of Conduct:

<https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/support-safety-conduct/student-conduct/code-conduct>

- University Academic Integrity Policy: <http://undergrad.psu.edu/aappm/G-9-academic-integrity.html>

- College of the Liberal Arts Academic Integrity Policy:

<https://la.psu.edu/current-students/undergraduate-students/education/academic-integrity>

- **Disability Accommodation:** Penn State welcomes students with disabilities into the University's educational programs. Every Penn State campus has an office for students with disabilities. Student Disability Resources (SDR) website provides contact information for every Penn State campus (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/disability-coordinator>). For further information, please visit Student Disability Resources website (<http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/>).

In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, you must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation. See documentation guidelines at <http://equity.psu.edu/student-disability-resources/guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus disability services office will provide you with an accommodation letter. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early as possible. You must follow this process for every semester that you request accommodations.

- **Counseling and Psychological Services:** Many students at Penn State face personal challenges or have psychological needs that may interfere with their academic progress, social development, or emotional wellbeing. The university offers a variety of confidential services to help you through difficult times, including individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, consultations, online chats, and mental health screenings. These services are provided by staff who welcome all students and embrace a philosophy respectful of clients' cultural and religious backgrounds, and sensitive to differences in race, ability, gender identity and sexual orientation.

- Counseling and Psychological Services at University Park (CAPS): 814-863-0395,

<http://studentaffairs.psu.edu/counseling/>

- Counseling and Psychological Services at Commonwealth Campuses
<http://senate.psu.edu/faculty/counseling-services-at-commonwealth-campuses/>
- Penn State Crisis Line (24 hours/7 days/week): 877-229-6400
- Crisis Text Line (24 hours/7 days/week): Text LIONS to 741741
- **Educational Equity and Reporting Bias:** Penn State takes great pride to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for students, faculty, and staff. Acts of intolerance, discrimination, or harassment due to age, ancestry, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religious belief, sexual orientation, or veteran status are not tolerated and can be reported through Educational Equity via the Report Bias webpage:
<http://equity.psu.edu/reportbias/>

ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (*subject to alteration as the course proceeds*)

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| Week 1 January 13 | Introduction to the course Preface, lxx-lxxxv (English)/7-22 (French) |
| Week 2 January 20 | Introduction: Classical Prejudices and the Return to Phenomena I. Sensation, 3-12/25-35 II. “Association” and the “Projection of Memories,” 13-27/36-49 III. “Attention” and “Judgment,” 28-51/50-77 IV. The Phenomenal Field, 52-65/78-91 |
| Week 3 January 27 | IV. The Phenomenal Field, 52-65/78-91 (continued) Lecture by Dan Zahavi , Professor of Philosophy, University of Copenhagen |
| Week 4 February 3 | Part I: The Body Introduction to Part One, 69-74/95-100 I. The Body as an Object and Mechanistic Physiology, 75-91/101-118 II. The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology, 92-99/119-126 III. The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motricity, 100-148/127-183 |
| Week 5 February 10 | IV. The Synthesis of One’s Own Body, 149-155/184-190 V. The Body as a Sexed Being, 156-178/191-212 VI. The Body as Expression, and Speech, 179-205/213-241 |
| Week 6 February 17 | Part II: The Perceived World Introduction to Part Two, 209-213/245-249 I. Sensing, 214-252/251-289 |
| Week 7 February 24 | II. Space, 253-311/290-351 |
| Week 8 March 3 | III. The Thing and the Natural World, 312-360/352-402 |
| Week 9 March 10 | Spring Break: no class |

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| Week 10 March 17 | VI. Others and the Human World, 361-383/403-424 |
| Week 11 March 24 | Part III: Being-for-Itself and Being-in-the-World I. The Cogito, 387-431/427-470 |
| Week 12 March 31 | II. Temporality, 432-457/471-496 |
| Week 13 April 7 | III. Freedom, 458-483/497-521 |
| Week 14 April 14 | Term Paper Prospectus & Bibliography Due: Thursday, 4/14 Discuss final paper projects |
| Week 15 April 21 | Merleau-Ponty and Critical Phenomenology Burke, “Anonymous Temporality and Gender” Weiss, “The Normal, the Natural, and the Normative” Ngo, “Racist Habits” Guest presentation by Juho Hotanen , Visiting Scholar, University of Jyväskylä, Finland |
| Week 16 April 28 | Salamon, “What’s Critical about Critical Phenomenology?” Wehrle, “Situating Normality” Guenther, “Critical Phenomenology” Guenther, “Six Senses of Critique for Critical Phenomenology” |
| Thursday, May 5 | Final Term Papers due by 5 pm |