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Office Hours: MW 1:00 - 2:20 and by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Phenomenology, one of the most influential intellectual movements of the last century, proposes that living experience be taken as the foundation for our knowledge and understanding of the world. Applying this insight to the natural world, environmental phenomenology (or “ecophenomenology”) has emerged in the last several decades as a novel method for understanding the human place in nature. Drawing on rich descriptions of our rootedness in nature, ecophenomenologists argue that our entrenched ways of understanding human subjectivity, scientific objectivity, materiality, and animality cut us off from the actual experience of our environment. The rediscovery of our perceptual, embodied, and intersubjective interactions with our surrounding world opens us to dimensions of nature’s meaning and value that our habitual ways of conceptualizing our environmental problems tend to obscure. The result is a more robust understanding of nature, our place within it, and our ethical obligations toward it. Our course will examine the methodological foundations of ecophenomenology in the writings of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, and then critically evaluate the claims of its best-known contemporary proponents, including David Abram, Arnold Berleant, Neil Evernden, Simon James, and David Wood. Our evaluation will focus on a series of themes that have been central to recent debates in environmental theory: the relationship between the living experience of nature and its scientific description; the aesthetic experience of the natural and built environment; the “world” of the non-human animal and claims of human exceptionalism; and the alienating effects of modern technology.

REQUIRED TEXTS

David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (Vintage, 1997).
Neil Evernden, *The Natural Alien*, 2nd ed. (Toronto, 1993).
Simon James, *The Presence of Nature* (Palgrave McMillan, 2009).
Robert Sokolowski, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Cambridge, 2000).
Jakob von Uexküll, *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* (Minnesota, 2010)
J. M. Coetzee, *The Lives of Animals* (Princeton, 2001).
Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (Fordham, 2008).
Essays and book chapters posted on Blackboard

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. participation & attendance	10%
2. six 2-page reading response papers	30%
3. midterm exam, 8 pages	20%
4. prospectus and annotated bibliography for final term paper	15%
5. final term paper, 10-12 pages	25%

◦ **Class Participation/Attendance:** Attendance at all class sessions is expected. If you miss more than one week of class for any reason, you will lose a final letter grade for each excessive absence. Please come to class prepared to engage actively in the discussion, which includes reading all assigned material ahead of time. Your participation will be evaluated on the consistency and thoughtfulness of your engagement in the discussion and on your alert and respectful attention to fellow class members. Absences from class will negatively affect your participation grade. Please bring your assigned texts to class.

◦ **Reading response papers:** Your two-page responses to class readings may be submitted on any day for which readings are assigned, although you may submit no more than one response each week, and three responses should be submitted prior to the midterm. Plan to discuss, at least briefly, all readings assigned for that class day. In the first

part of your response, identify the thesis of the texts and summarize their arguments. In the second part, offer your own reactions and response. Responses are due at the beginning of class, and no late responses will be accepted. Reading responses are worth a significant portion of the final grade, since they reflect your engagement with the course over its full span.

- **Midterm exam:** The midterm exam will consist of four concise (two-page) responses to questions selected from a set posted on Blackboard. These questions will concern concepts and texts discussed in the first half of the class. Exams should be submitted through Blackboard by the end of the day on Monday, March 21st.
- **Prospectus and Annotated Bibliography:** A prospectus of your final paper is due in class on Monday, April 25th, with two components: (1) a 2-3 page detailed description of the topic and outline of your proposed argument; and (2) an annotated bibliography of at least five primary or peer-reviewed secondary texts that you intend to consult (in addition to texts assigned for the course). Each annotation should be around one double-spaced page and include a summary of the book or article as well as an indication of its relevance for your project. Your prospectus must receive my approval in order for your final term paper to be accepted.
- **Final term paper:** Final 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 sources in addition to those discussed in class, and (b) the development of your own original position or critical response. Term papers should be 3000-3500 words (around 10-12 double-spaced pages) and use a standard system of citation (e.g., APA or Chicago). Exams should be submitted through Blackboard by 9:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 21st.

POLICIES

Retaining copies of all coursework: Please retain copies of all work submitted and the original copy of all work returned to you during the term until the final course grade has been posted. In the event of any question concerning whether grades have been accurately recorded, it is your responsibility to provide these copies as documentation.

Honor Code: Oberlin College's student-created, student-run Honor Code is vital to the integrity of the work that all of us do in the institution. Acknowledging the influence of others and understanding the academic customs of showing one's sources are highly valued skills of liberal arts learning. You can find the code online at the college web site: www.oberlin.edu/students/links-life/rules-reg.html. One requirement of the code is that you must write the following statement on every assignment: "I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment." You must also sign your name to that statement. Typing your full name after the Honor Code will serve as a signature if you submit an assignment electronically via email.

Access for students with disabilities: If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services in Peters G-27/G-28.

Computers and other electronic equipment: Please turn off all electronic equipment, including cell phones, pagers, MP3 players, and laptop computers prior to the start of class. Laptops may be used during class only for legitimate academic reasons.

Late work: Work will lose one full letter grade for each calendar day late. If you need an extension, please contact me at least 24 hours in advance.

TENTATIVE ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (*any changes to these assignments will be announced in class*)

Week 1:	What is Ecophenomenology?
Monday, 2/7	Introduction to the Course
Wednesday, 2/9	Abram, <i>The Spell of the Sensuous</i> , 3-72
Week 2:	
Monday, 2/14	Evernden, <i>The Natural Alien</i> , 3-72
Monday, 2/16	James, <i>The Presence of Nature</i> , 1-37
Week 3:	The Experience of Nature
Monday, 2/21	Reading Day (Class cancelled) Sokolowski, <i>Introduction to Phenomenology</i> , 8-65, 146-55
Wednesday, 2/23	Husserl, <i>The Crisis of European Sciences</i> , 21-59, 68-73, 121-147 Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , 299-345
Week 4:	
Monday, 2/28	Kohák, "Varieties of Ecological Experience" Evernden, "Nature in Industrial Society"
Wednesday, 3/2	Naess, <i>Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle</i> , 35-67
Week 5:	The Aesthetics of Nature
Monday, 3/5	Heidegger, "Origin of the Work of Art"
Wednesday, 3/7	Crawford, "Nature and Art" Merleau-Ponty, "Cézanne's Doubt"
Week 6:	
Monday, 3/14	Norberg-Schultz, <i>Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture</i> , 5-23
Wednesday, 3/16	Berleant, "Aesthetic Perception in Environmental Design" Berleant, "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature"
Week 7:	Animality and Humanity
Monday, 3/21	MIDTERMS DUE (Submit through Blackboard) James, <i>The Presence of Nature</i> , 38-64
Wednesday, 3/23	Uexkull, <i>A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans</i> , 41-135.
Week 8:	SPRING BREAK
March 28 - 30	

Week 9: Monday, 4/4	Köhler, <i>The Mentality of Apes</i> , 25-66, 225-263 Merleau-Ponty, <i>The Structure of Behavior</i> , 93-128
Wednesday, 4/6	Merleau-Ponty, <i>The Structure of Behavior</i> , 129-184
Week 10: Monday, 4/11	Heidegger, <i>The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics</i> , 176-273
Wednesday, 4/13	Derrida, <i>The Animal that Therefore I Am</i> , 1-51
Week 11: Monday, 4/18	Wood, "Thinking with Cats"
Wednesday, 4/20	Coetzee, <i>The Lives of Animals</i> , 15-69.
Week 12:	Modern Technology
Monday, 4/25	PROSPECTUS & BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE (in class) Heidegger, "Memorial Address" Heidegger, "The Question concerning Technology"
Wednesday, 4/27	Foltz, "On Heidegger and the Interpretation of Environmental Crisis"
Week 13: Monday, 5/2	Borgmann, "Information and Reality at the Turn of the Century"
Wednesday, 5/4	Vinge, "The Coming Technological Singularity" McKibben, <i>Enough: Staying Human in an Engineered Age</i> , 66-108
Week 14:	The Futures of Ecophenomenology
Monday, 5/9	James, <i>The Presence of Nature</i> , 65-155
Wednesday, 5/11	Wood, "What is Eco-Phenomenology?"
Final Exam: Saturday, 5/21	Final Essay due by 9:00 p.m. (submit through Blackboard)