

Instructor: Dr. Ted Toadvine (toadvine@uoregon.edu)
Office Hours: W 10:00 - 12:00, and by appointment, 233 Susan Campbell Hall
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The concept of chiasm may be the most significant legacy of Merleau-Ponty's later thought, even though the term rarely appears in the texts that he prepared for publication. From his working notes, we learn that chiasm is intimately related to other late concepts, such as flesh, encroachment, and reversibility, and that it takes on the status of a general structure of ontological mediation that characterizes philosophy as such. As Renaud Barbaras writes, "It is necessary . . . to picture the universe as intuited by Merleau-Ponty as a proliferation of chiasms that integrate themselves according to different levels of generality" (*The Being of the Phenomenon*, 307). Taking the concept of chiasm as our guiding thread, the seminar will begin by tracing its emergence from Merleau-Ponty's earlier figures for ontological mediation: *Gestalt* (in *The Structure of Behavior*) and radical reflection (in *Phenomenology of Perception*). We will then examine in close detail the logic of the chiasm as it is conceived in Merleau-Ponty's late writings, with particular attention to its role in perception, intersubjectivity, language, and ontology. Lastly, we will explore the vicissitudes of the concept of chiasm since Merleau-Ponty in the work of Derrida, Nancy, Rogozinski, and Meillassoux. In *Positions*, for example, Derrida writes that the "form of the chiasm, of the X, interests me a great deal, not as the symbol of the unknown, but because there is in it ... a kind of fork ... that is, moreover, unequal, one of the points extending its range further than the other: this is the figure of the double gesture, the intersection" (70). Our interest here will be in the future of the concept of chiasm, if it has one, and what transformations it must undergo to offer new paths for thinking.

TEXTS

Please bring assigned texts to class. You are also encouraged to consult original language texts whenever possible. The following texts are available at the UO bookstore. All other reading selections will be posted as PDF files on Canvas.

- Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. Alden Fisher (Duquesne UP, 1983)
- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (Routledge, 2012)
- Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Northwestern UP, 1964)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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| 1. participation | 10% |
| 2. presentation of secondary article | 10% |
| 3. term paper prospectus & annotated bibliography | 20% |
| 4. final term paper, 12-14 pages | 60% |
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1. 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.
 2. Presentation of secondary article: Each student will sign up to present to the class a secondary article relevant to the course theme. All members of the class are expected to read these articles prior to the presentation. Each student will select her or his own article to present, preferably a peer-reviewed journal article or book chapter. Your selection should have my approval prior to distribution. Please provide me with an electronic copy of your article for posting on Canvas at least one week in advance of your class presentation. After presenting the article (in 5-10 minutes), plan to lead a discussion on the topic for an additional 5-10 minutes (15 minutes total). Your presentation and handling of discussion will be the basis for 10% of your final course grade.

3. Term paper prospectus & bibliography: You will submit, in the 8th 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 in hard copy. 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.
4. 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 secondary sources in addition to primary texts, and (b) the development of your own original position or critical response. Term papers should be 12-14 double-spaced pages (typical conference length) and must be proof-read and use a standard system of citation (e.g., APA or Chicago). Papers are due on the date scheduled for the final exam. 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. Your term paper will count for 60% of your final course grade.

POLICIES

- Retaining copies of all course work: 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.
- Academic honesty: Please review and familiarize yourself with the provisions of the Code of Student Conduct regarding academic honesty, <http://conduct.uoregon.edu>. Violations of academic honesty will be met with disciplinary action (the usual punishment is an "F" for the course).
- Inclement weather: It is generally expected that class will meet unless the University is officially closed for inclement weather. If it becomes necessary to cancel class while the University remains open, this will be announced on Canvas and through the Canvas email system.
- Sexual Violence: The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at safe.uoregon.edu.
- Individual differences: If you experience difficulty in this course for any reason, please don't hesitate to consult with me. If you have a disability that may prevent you from fully demonstrating your abilities, you should contact me personally as soon as possible so we can discuss accommodations necessary to ensure your full participation and facilitate your education process. The university offers a wide range of services to support you in your efforts to meet the course requirements, including the following
 - *University Teaching and Learning Center (TLC)*: TLC provides numerous resources (including courses, workshops, and tutoring) to help UO students succeed. They work with a diverse student body with a wide range of needs. If you are unsure which resources would work best, they are happy to answer questions and share suggestions. Web: <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/> – Phone: 541-346-3226
 - *University Counseling and Testing Center (UCTC)*: The UCTC provides comprehensive mental health care and testing services to the University of Oregon campus. The primary mission of the UCTC is to provide quality

clinical/therapeutic services, psychological testing and assessment, psychoeducational workshops, and outreach as well as emergency services. Web: <http://counseling.uoregon.edu/dnn/> – Phone: 541-346-3227

◦ *Accessible Education Center (AEC)*: The AEC is dedicated to facilitating and supporting accessible education through active collaboration with students, faculty, staff, and the community. The AEC works to create and sustain physical, curricular, and informational environments that are informed by and responsive to the diverse characteristics and experiences of students with disabilities and variations of ability. Web: <http://aec.uoregon.edu/> – Phone: 541-346-1155

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

Week 1: 3/28	Introduction to the course Gasché, “Reading Chiasms” (<i>Of Minimal Things</i> , 263-284) Toadvine, “The Chiasm” (<i>The Routledge Companion to Phenomenology</i> , 336-347)
Week 2: 4/4	Gestalt Ontology and Historicity <i>The Structure of Behavior</i> , Ch. 2, “The Structures of Behavior,” “Conclusion,” 93-128 <i>The Structure of Behavior</i> , Ch. 3, 129-184
Week 3: 4/11	<i>The Structure of Behavior</i> , Ch. 4, 184-224
Week 4: 4/18	Radical Reflection and the Immemorial <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , Introduction, Ch. 4, “The Phenomenal Field,” 52-65 <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , Part II, Ch. 1, “Sensing,” 214-252
Week 5: 4/25	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , Part II, Ch. 2, “Space,” 253-311 <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , Part II, Ch. 3, “The Thing and the Natural World,” 312-360
Week 6: 5/2	Merleau-Ponty’s Chiasm “Man and Adversity” (<i>The Merleau-Ponty Reader</i> , 189-207) Husserl, <i>Ideas II</i> , Section II, Ch. 3, “The Constitution of Psychic Reality Through the Body,” 151-169 <i>Nature</i> , Part I, Ch. 4c, “The Ideas of Husserl,” 70-79 “The Philosopher and his Shadow” (<i>Signs</i> , 159-181) Introduction to <i>Signs</i> , 14-22
Week 7: 5/9	<i>The Visible and the Invisible</i> , Ch. 4, “The Intertwining—The Chiasm,” 130-155 <i>The Visible and the Invisible</i> , Ch. 5, “Preobjective Being: The Solipsist World,” 156-162 <i>The Visible and the Invisible</i> , Working Notes, 199, 214-15, 238-9, 259-70, 274-5
Week 8: 5/16	The Legacy of the Chiasm Derrida, “+R (Into the Bargain),” (<i>The Truth in Painting</i> , 149-181) Nancy, “Corpus” (<i>The Birth to Presence</i> , 189-207) Derrida, “Tangent III” (<i>On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy</i> , 183-215) Term Paper Prospectus & Bibliography due Friday, 5/20, by 5 pm
Week 9: 5/23	Rogozinski, “The Chiasm and the Remainder (How Does Touching Touch Itself?),” (<i>Rethinking Facticity</i> , 229-252) Rogozinski, <i>The Ego and the Flesh</i> , Chs. 4-8, 123-185
Week 10: 5/30	Meillassoux, <i>After Finitude</i> , Ch. 1, “Ancestrality,” 1-27 Meillassoux, <i>After Finitude</i> , Ch. 5, “Ptolemy’s Revenge,” 112-128
Monday, June 6	Final Term Papers Due