

Touching Touch (PHIL 407/507)
Wednesday 6:00 - 8:50, 185 Lillis

CRN: 25944/25945
Winter 2015

Instructor: Dr. Ted Toadvine (toadvine@uoregon.edu)
Office Hours: R 1:30 - 3:30, and by appointment, 233 Susan Campbell Hall
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

What is “touch,” and what does it mean to touch or be touched by something or someone? Is life coextensive with touch? Is there a single “sense” of touch, and is it more basic and fundamental than the “other” senses? How has touch, with the human hand as its exemplary figure, inspired a haptocentric epistemology and metaphysics? Is the reflexivity of touch, as when one hand touches another, the embodied form of self-givenness and self-presence? How does perceiving touch relate to caressing touch, and do different sexes embody different relationships of touch? Is there an ethics and a politics of touch? What might it mean to touch or be touched by the intangible? The philosophy of touch has wide-ranging implications for our understanding of embodiment, perception, ontology, intersubjectivity, sexual difference, animality, ethics, politics, and religion. After a brief consideration of Aristotle on touch, we will examine Husserl’s detailed descriptions of the role of self-sensing in the constitution of the body, then trace Merleau-Ponty’s appropriation of this analysis for his ontology of flesh, with particular attention to the concepts of reversibility, chiasm, *écart*, and bodily reflexivity as thinking in figural form. We turn then to the ethical, political, and religious implications of touch in the work of Levinas, Irigaray, Nancy, and Derrida. In closing, we will consider touch as a form of political resistance in contact improvisation and nonviolent protest. Throughout, our guiding question will be to assess the relevance and significance of touch for the future of philosophy.

TEXTS

Students are expected to bring the assigned texts to every class. Graduate students are especially encouraged to consult original language texts whenever possible.

To Procure:

- Luce Irigaray, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, trans. Carolyn Burke and Gillian Gill. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Jean-Luc Nancy, *Corpus*, trans. Richard Rand. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008.
- Jacques Derrida, *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy*, trans. Christine Irizarry. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.

On Blackboard (selections from the following):

- Aristotle, *On the Soul*, trans. J. A. Smith, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, Vol. 1, ed. Jonathan Barnes. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy, Second Book [Ideas II]*, trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989.
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and his Shadow,” in *Signs*, trans. Richard McCleary, 159-181. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968.
- Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969.
- Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter with Carolyn Burke. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Danielle Goldman, “Bodies on the Line: Contact Improvisation and Techniques of Nonviolent Protest,” *Dance Research Journal* 39, no. 1 (Summer 2007): 60-74.
- Secondary essays selected for presentation

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

	<u>407</u>	<u>507</u>
1. participation	10%	10%
2. weekly reading responses, ~2 pages each	30%	
3. midterm and final essays (7-8 pages each)	60%	
4. presentation of secondary article		10%
5. term paper prospectus & annotated bibliography		20%
6. final term paper, 12-14 pages		60%

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. **Weekly reading responses (undergraduate):** Response papers are brief (~2 pages), informal reactions to the material assigned for a particular class session. These papers may develop questions about the assigned readings, explore implications, draw comparisons with other works from within or outside the class, etc. The response papers are an informal opportunity to develop your own thoughts about the material under discussion. No particular format is required. Papers will be graded on the basis of the depth and originality of your thoughtful engagement with the assigned material. You have the opportunity to turn in one response paper per week by email, due by 9 am on Wednesday mornings. Your best 5 response paper grades will be averaged in calculating 30% of your final grade (and you may choose to turn in the minimum of 5). Extra or late summaries cannot be accepted in order to make up for delinquency in completing these assignments at the proper time.
3. **Midterm and final essays (undergraduate):** Undergraduate students will complete two essays in response to questions posted on Blackboard, the first due in Week 5, and the second due on the date of the final exam. These essays should be 2000-2500 words (~7-8 pages) with standard fonts and margins, double-spaced, proof-read, and stapled. Essays must be submitted in hard copy; no emailed essays will be accepted. Final essays should be submitted at the Department of Philosophy office (211 Susan Campbell Hall). Essays will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. Each essay will be worth 30% of the final grade. Please see Blackboard for the standard essay grading rubric.
4. **Presentation of secondary article (graduate):** Each graduate participant 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 graduate 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 Blackboard 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 10 minutes. Your presentation and handling of discussion will be the basis for 10% of your final course grade.
5. **Term paper prospectus & bibliography (graduate):** 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. 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.
6. **Final term paper (graduate):** 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 and must be stapled, 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, and extensions will be granted only in the case of genuine, documented emergencies. Late papers will lose one letter grade for each calendar day that they are late. Your term paper will count for 60% of your final course grade.

POLICIES

- **Incompletes and extensions** will be given only in the event of documented emergencies.
- **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.
- **Computers and other electronic equipment:** Leave them home or turn them off. Exceptions granted only for legitimate academic reasons, which do not include updating your Facebook page.
- **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 Blackboard and through the Blackboard email system.
- **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 (any changes to these assignments will be announced in class)

Week 1: 1/7	Introduction to the course Aristotle, <i>On the Soul</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Book II, §2,3,5,11,12 (pp. 22-26, 29-31, 40-43)▶ Book III, §2, 12, 13 (pp. 45-48, 61-64)
Week 2: 1/14	Husserl, <i>Ideas II</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Section II, Ch. 3, “The Constitution of Psychic Reality Through the Body,” §35-47, 151-180▶ §49, “The personalistic attitude versus the naturalistic,” 183-194 Merleau-Ponty, “The Philosopher and his Shadow” (<i>Signs</i> , 159-181)

Week 3: 1/21	<p>Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Part I, Ch. 2, “The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology,” 92-99 ▶ Part II, Ch. 1, “Sensing,” 214-252. <p>Merleau-Ponty, <i>The Visible and the Invisible</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ch. 4, “The Intertwining—The Chiasm,” 130-155 ▶ Working notes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flesh of the world... (248-251) Touching—touching oneself (254-257) Flesh—Mind (259-260) Visible-seer (260-262) Chiasm— —Reversibility (263-264)
Week 4: 1/28	<p>Levinas, <i>Totality and Infinity</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Section II: Interiority and Economy, 110-115, 127-142, 152-174 ▶ Section IV.B, “Phenomenology of Eros,” 256-266 <p>Levinas, <i>Outside the Subject</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “On Intersubjectivity: Notes on Merleau-Ponty,” 96-103 ▶ “In Memory of Alphonse de Waelhens,” 104-115
Week 5: 2/4	<p>Irigaray, <i>This Sex Which Is Not One</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Ch. 2, “This Sex Which Is Not One,” 23-33 ▶ Ch. 11, “When Our Lips Speak Together,” 205-218 <p>Irigaray, <i>An Ethics of Sexual Difference</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “The Invisible of the Flesh: A Reading of Merleau-Ponty, <i>The Visible and the Invisible</i>, ‘The Intertwining—The Chiasm,’” 151-184 ▶ “The Fecundity of the Caress: A Reading of Levinas, <i>Totality and Infinity</i>, ‘Phenomenology of Eros,’” 185-217 <p>Midterm Essays (undergraduates) due Friday, 2/6, by 5 pm</p>
Week 6: 2/11	<p>Nancy, <i>Corpus</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “Corpus,” 2-121 (bilingual text) ▶ “On the Soul,” 122-135 ▶ “The Intruder,” 161-170
Week 7: 2/18	<p>Derrida, <i>On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “When our eyes touch...,” 1-8 ▶ §4, “The Untouchable, or the Vow of Abstinence,” 66-91 ▶ §5, “Tender,” 92-110 ▶ §7, “Tangent I,” 135-146
Week 8: 2/25	<p>Derrida, <i>On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ §8, “Tangent II,” 159-182 ▶ §9, “Tangent III,” 183-215 ▶ §10, “Tangent IV,” 216-262 <p>Term Paper Prospectus & Bibliography (graduates) due Friday, 2/27, by 5 pm</p>
Week 9: 3/4	<p>Derrida, <i>On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Part III, Punctuations: “And You,” 265-314
Week 10: 3/11	<p>Online resources for contact improvisation (see Blackboard)</p> <p>Goldman, “Bodies on the Line”</p> <p>Closing Considerations</p>
Wednesday, 3/18	<p>Final Essays and Term Papers Due</p> <p>Philosophy office, 211 Susan Campbell Hall</p>