

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR THEORY AND CRITICISM
TC 9538B Critical Phenomenology
Winter 2022

Instructor: Helen Fielding (Philosophy/Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies)

Class time: Friday, 10:00am -1:00 pm

Offices: STvH 2157A and LH 3237

Phone 519-661-2111 x 84548

Email: hfieldin@uwo.ca

Office Hours: TBA or by Appointment

Land Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that Western University is located on the traditional lands of the Anishinaabek, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Neutral peoples, on lands connected to several Treaties including Treaty 6 London Township, Treaty 7 Sombra Township, Treaty 21 Longwoods and the Dish with One Spoon Covenant Wampum. This place continues to be home to diverse Indigenous peoples who are recognized as contemporary stewards of the land and vital contributors to society.

Course Description:

Phenomenology is the study of appearances, the figure against the ground. The world as it appears is ambiguous, indeterminate and open to wonder, and phenomenologists seek to describe it as it comes into appearance in lived experience. Critical phenomenology investigates not only the structures that shape lived experience and the ways we encounter the world, it also critically questions those structures that support appearances. These structures such as heteronormativity, racialization, colonialism, patriarchy and normativity do not generally come into appearance in themselves. But they nonetheless shape relations between people, world, and environment. Our body schemas, along with the social, cultural and institutional structures shape and condition how we experience and understand our everyday experiences and relations. But they are open to change. Critical phenomenology seeks not only to describe and understand the world we live but also to transform it. Intersecting with feminist and Indigenous philosophy, as well as critical race theory, queer theory and critical disability studies, this course will take up critical phenomenological works alongside excerpts from the classical phenomenologists they draw on.

Course Objectives

This course will enable students to:

- Develop an understanding of critical phenomenology in the context of phenomenological theorizing
- Understand and apply a critical phenomenological approach
- Recognize some ethical and political issues raised by critical phenomenologists
- Develop critical thinking and writing skills

Course Materials

- Copies of articles will be made available through OWL or through Weldon library
- Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald Landes (Northwestern: 2012) available as digital text through Weldon library. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=1433878>
- Recommended Text: *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, eds. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, Gayle Salamon, Northwestern University Press, 2019 (available for complete download through Weldon library). <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.proxy1.lib.uwo.ca/lib/west/detail.action?pq-origsite=primo&docID=5845955>

Evaluation

Phenomenological analysis (Essay 1)	25%	(5-7 pages)	due Feb. 18
Final Essay	40%	(12-15 pages)	due April 25
Participation	15%		
Conference presentation	20%		(April 8)

Short essay: Students will provide a phenomenological description. This description may be drawn on for the final essay.

Final essay and Conference Presentation: Students will develop a critical phenomenological theme that focuses on their individual areas of interest in consultation with the instructor—this theme will be presented to classmates on April 8. Students will present on their theme for 10 minutes and there will be 5 minutes for discussion of each paper. It will then form the basis of the final essay.

Participation: participation will be assessed in terms of having read the text, participating in and leading small group discussion, and making appropriate contributions to conversation. Each student will be expected to lead their small group in discussion and report back to the class at least twice throughout the semester depending on class size. Class attendance is mandatory.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously, and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Essays will be submitted through OWL.

Plagiarism Checking

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the

commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

A Note on Course Content

In this course we will be dealing with themes that affect each of us differentially at a personal, social and intellectual level. While full discussion of the issues is encouraged – please be respectful of others—which can mean being willing to question your own perspectives. Hatred and intolerance (including racist, trans phobic, homophobic, ableist perspectives) will not be tolerated. Let’s all be open and willing to learn from one another which might mean that on any given day you might be in a place where it is appropriate to do more listening than speaking. If you find the material is causing you distress, please let me know—I can also help you to find appropriate support if required.

Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519-661-3030 (during class hours) or 519-433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.

Schedule

January 14 Introduction: *What is Critical Phenomenology?*

1. Lisa Guenther, “Critical Phenomenology,” in *50 Concepts*, 11-16.
2. Helen Fielding, “A Feminist Phenomenology Manifesto,” in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures* (Indiana U Press, 2017): vii-xii.

January 21 On Being Human

1. Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, Unparalleled Catastrophe for Our Species? Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations“, in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, ed. Katherine McKittrick (Durham: Duke U Press, 2015), 9-89. Available through the library.

Recommended Readings

2. Sylvia Wynter, “Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its

Overrepresentation—an Argument,” in *The New Centennial Review* 3.3 (2003): 257-337.

3. Alexander Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics and the Black Feminist theories of the Human* (Duke U Press: 2014).
4. Hortense J. Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.” *Diacritics* 17.2 (Summer 1987): 64-81.
5. Other essays in *On Being Human as Praxis*

January 28 Colonial Temporality

1. Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness” from *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (NY: Grove Press, 1967).
2. Alia Al-Saji, “Too Late: Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past,” *Insights: Institute of Advanced Study* 6.5 (2013): 2-13.
3. Alia Al-Saji, “Durée” in *50 Concepts*, 99-106.

Recommended Readings

4. Alia Al-Saji, “Too Late: Fanon, The Dismembered Past, and a Phenomenology of Racialized Time”, in *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology*, eds. Leshwin Laubscher et. Al (NY Routledge), 177-193.
5. George Yancy, “Confiscated Bodies,” in *50 Concepts*, 69-75.
6. Axelle Karera, “The Racial Epidemeral Schema,” in *50 Concepts*, 289-293.
7. Other essays in *Fanon, Phenomenology and Psychology* (available for download from Weldon).

February 4 Ideological thinking

1. Arendt, “Ideology and Terror,” in *Origins of Totalitarianism* (NY: Harcourt, 1968 [1951], 460-471.
2. Arendt, *The Human Condition* (U of Chicago 1958), excerpt from “The *Vita Activa* and the Modern Age,” pp. 257-268, 273-280.

February 11 Lived Space

1. Lisa Guenther, Intro and Chapter 7 from *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its After Lives*.
2. Perry Zurn, “Social Death,” in *50 Concepts*, 309-314.
3. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Don Landes (NY: Routledge, 2012), pp. 259-265, 306-311. (Weldon library-digital)

Recommended Reading

4. Sarah Ahmed, “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology,” in *GLQ* 12.14 (2006): 543-574.

February 18 Dialogues with Indigenous Philosophies

1. Kyle Whyte, “Collective Continuance,” in *50 Concepts*, 53-59.

2. Dolleen Tisawii'ashii Manning, "The Murmuration of Birds: An Anishinaabe Ontology of Mnidoo-Worlding," *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, 154-182.

February 25 (Reading Week)

March 4 **Early critique of Classical Phenomenology**

1. Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible* (Northwestern: 1968), 130-155.

March 11 **Cultivating Perception**

1. H. Fielding, "Introduction", *Cultivating Perception Through Artworks* (Indiana University Press, 2021), pp. 3-23.
2. Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Critical Ethical Vision," *Chiasmi International* 11 (2009): 375-398.
3. H. Fielding, "Cultivating Perception: Phenomenological Encounters with Artworks," *Signs* 40.2 (2015): 280-289.

Recommended Readings

4. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, excerpts from chapter "The Thing and the Natural World," pp. 320-326, 331-332, 342-347.(Weldon Library, digital)

March 18 **Questioning Philosophy from the Perspective of Everyday Lived Experience**

1. Talia Mae Bettcher, "What is Trans Philosophy", *Hypatia* 34.4: 644-667.
2. Mariana Ortega, "World-Traveling, Double Consciousness, and Resistance," in *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self*, (SUNY, 2016), pp. 119-142.

March 25 **The Body Schema as Intersection of the social, lived experience and essencing of the Self**

1. Henry Rubin, "Phenomenology as Method in Trans Studies," *GLQ* 4.2 (1998): 263-281.
2. Gayle Salaman, "Movement," from *Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia*, 63-102.(full text available through Weldon).
3. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp 82-85, 100-105, 143-148, 190-155 (Weldon Library digital)

Recommended Readings

4. Helen Ngo, "Racist Habits," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42.9 (2016): 847-872.
5. Dianne Chisholm, "Climbing Like a Girl", *Hypatia* 23.1 (2008): 9-40.
6. H. Fielding, "The Habit Body", in *50 Concepts*

April 1

Non-Normate Bodies

1. Joel Michael Reynolds, Merleau-Ponty, World-Creating Blindness, and the Phenomenology of Non-Normate Bodies, *Chiasmi International* 19 (2017): 419-434.
2. Corinne Lajoie, "Sense and Normativity: Merleau-Ponty on Levels of Embodiment and the Disorientations of Love" in *Chiasmi International* 22 (2020): 413-427.

Recommended Reading

3. Joel Michael Reynolds, "the Normate," in *50 Concepts for a Critical* Phenomenology*, 243-248.

April 8

Conference Day (9:30-1:30)

Note: This Outline is Subject to Change before the Course Begins.