

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY**  
**CENTRE FOR THEORY AND CRITICISM**  
**TC 9538 Critical Phenomenology**  
**Winter 2020**

Instructor: Helen Fielding (Philosophy/Women's Studies and Feminist Research)

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

Offices: Philosophy StvH 2137, WSFR LH 3237

Phone 59-661-2111 x 84548

Email: [hfieldin@uwo.ca](mailto:hfieldin@uwo.ca)

Office Hours: Thursdays 2-3 StvH 2137, Fridays 1:00-2:00 LH 3237 or by appointment

**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, even as they shape the relations between people, world and environment that do. Our body schemas, along with the social, cultural and institutional structures supported by the geomateriality of the earth, 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, Indigenous and eco phenomenologies, 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 and are also available through the library.
- Recommended Text: *50 Concepts for a Critical\* Phenomenology*, eds. Gail Weiss, Ann V. Murphy, Gayle Salamon, Northwestern University Press, 2019.

## **Evaluation**

Phenomenological analysis (Essay 1)	25%	(5-7 pages) due Feb. 14
Final Essay	40%	(10-14 pages) due April 27
Participation	15%	
Conference presentation	20%	(April 3)

**Short essay:** Students will provide either a phenomenological description or a textual analysis. This analysis 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 3. 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](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

Essays will be submitted through OWL.

## **Support Services**

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.

## **Statement of Recognition**

“Western University is situated on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples who have longstanding relationships to the region of southwestern Ontario and the City of London. In close proximity to Western, there are 3 local First Nations communities: the Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Oneida Nation of the Thames, and Munsee Delaware Nation. In the region of southwestern Ontario, there are 9 First Nations and a growing Indigenous urban population. Western recognizes the significant historical and contemporary

contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original peoples of Turtle Island (North America) to the development of Canada.”

## Schedule

### January 10 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.
3. Duane H. Davis, “The Phenomenological Method,” in *50 Concepts for a Critical\* Phenomenology*, 3-9.
4. Joel Michael Reynolds, “The Normate,” in *50 Concepts*, 243-248.

### January 17 *What is at Stake?*

1. Merleau-Ponty, “The Intertwining—The Chiasm,” in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130-155.  
**Recommended Readings:**
2. Merleau-Ponty, “Einstein and the Crisis of Reason,” in *Signs*, 192-197.
3. Hannah Arendt, “Prologue,” to *The Human Condition*, 1-6.

### January 24 *Spatiality I: Queering Space*

1. Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology,” in *GLQ* 12.14 (2006): 543-574.
2. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, excerpt from chapter on Space, 253-265.

### January 31 *Spatiality II: 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*, pp. 293-311, 365 (bottom) to 371.

### February 7 *Trans Phenomena*

1. Talia Mae Bettcher, “Trans Phenomena” in *50 Concepts*, 329-335.
2. Gayle Salaman, “Movement,” from *Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia*, 63-102.
3. Talia Mae Bettcher, “When Selves have a Sex,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 61.5 (2014): 605-620.

### February 14 *Temporality I: Racialized Time*

1. Frantz Fanon, excerpt from *Black Skin, White Masks*
2. Alia Al-Saji, “Too Late: Racialized Time and the Closure of the Past”
3. George Yancy, “Confiscated Bodies,” in *50 Concepts*, 69-75.
4. Alia Al-Saji, “Durée” in *50 Concepts*, 99-106.

**February 21 (Reading Week)**

**February 28    Temporality II: Intuition and Collective Continuance**

1. Kyle Whyte, "Collective Continuance," in *50 Concepts*, 53-59.
2. Ted Toadvine, "Geomateriality," in *50 Concepts*, 149-154.
3. Dolleen Manning, "The Murmuration of Birds: An Anishinaabe Ontology of Mnidoo-Worlding," *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, 154-182.
4. Dorothea Olkowski, "Using our Intuition," in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, pp. 3-20.

**March 6        Perception II: Ethical Intersubjectivity and Flesh**

1. Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining—The Chiasm," in *The Visible and the Invisible*, 130-155. We will focus on specific pages.
2. Alexander Weheliye, *Habeus Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics and the Black Feminist Theories of the Human*, pp. 33-51.
3. Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book." *Diacritics* 17.2 (Summer, 1987): 64-81.
4. Donald A. Landes, "The Flesh of the World," in *50 Concepts*, pp. 141-147.
5. Katherine McKittrick, "Diachronic loops/deadweight tonnage/bad made measure." *Cultural Geographies* 23.1 (2016): 3–18.

**March 13      Bare Life**

1. Arendt, "Totalitarianism in Power," from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), 389-459.
2. Arendt, "Ideology and Terror," in OT, 460-471.
3. Giorgio Agamben, "The Camp as 'Nomos'" in *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, 166-180.

**March 20      Perception I: Perceiving, Thinking**

1. H. Fielding, "Cultivating Perception: Phenomenological Encounters with Artworks," *Signs* 40.2 (2015): 280-289.
2. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, excerpt from chapter on Sensing
3. Keith Whitmoyer, "Sens/Sense", in *50 Concepts*, 303-307.
4. Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Critical Ethical Vision," *Chiasmi International* 11 (2009): 375-398.

**March 27      Agency II: Freedom and Resistance    Note: class begins at 9:30am**

1. Linda Martín Alcoff, chapter from *Rape and Resistance* (2018).

**April 3        Conference Day**