

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

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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	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 is evaluated in terms of engaging with course readings and contributing appropriately to discussion. 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.

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.
- January 17 Embodiment 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
- January 24 Embodiment II: Moving Bodies**
1. Helen Ngo, "Racist Habits," in *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42.9 (2016): 847-872.
 2. Diane Chisholm, "Climbing like a Girl," *Hypatia* 23.1 (2008): 9-40.
 3. Helen Fielding, "The Habit Body," in *50 Concepts*, 155-160.
 4. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, excerpt form chapter on Motility.
- January 31 Temporality I: Racialized Time**
1. Frantz Fanon, chapter 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 7 Temporality II: Intuition and Collective Continuance**
1. Dorothea Olkowski, "Using our Intuition," in *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, pp. 3-20.
 2. Kyle Whyte, "Collective Continuance," in *50 Concepts*, 53-59.
 3. Dolleen Manning, "The Murmuration of Birds: An Anishinaabe Ontology of Mnidoo-Worlding, *Feminist Phenomenology Futures*, 154-182.
 4. Bergson, excerpt from *Matter and Memory*
- February 14 Spatiality I: Lived Space**
1. Lisa Guenther, chapter from *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and its After Lives*

2. Ted Toadvine, "Geomateriality," in *50 Concepts*, 149-154
3. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, excerpt from chapter on Space.

February 21 (Reading Week)

February 28 Spatiality II: Living Worlds

1. Heidegger, "The Worldliness of the World," from *Being and Time*
2. Mariana Ortega, chapter from *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology*

March 6 Perception I: Perceiving, Thinking

1. H. Fielding, "Cultivating Perception: Phenomenological Encounters with Artworks," *Signs* 40.2 (2015): 280-289.
2. Jorella Andrews "Appearance is Everything," in *Showing Off* (Bloomsbury 2014), pp. 57-99.
3. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology*, excerpt from chapter on Sensing
4. Keith Whitmoyer, "Sens/Sense", in *50 Concepts*, 303-307.

March 13 Perception II: Ethical Intersubjectivity

1. Merleau-Ponty, excerpt from the Chiasm chapter in *The Visible and the Invisible*
2. Alia Al-Saji, "A Phenomenology of Critical Ethical Vision," *Chiasmi International* 11 (2009): 375-398.
3. Joel Michael Reynolds, "The Normate," in *50 Concepts*, 243-248.

March 20 Agency I: Action

1. Hannah Arendt, "Prologue," and excerpt from "Action," *The Human Condition* (1958).
2. Arendt, "Ideology and Terror" from *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), 460-471.

March 27 Agency II: Freedom and Resistance

1. Simone de Beauvoir, excerpt from *Ethics of Ambiguity*
2. Linda Alcoff, chapter from *Rape and Resistance* (2018).

April 3 Conference Day