Topics in 20th-century Philosophy:
Merleau-Ponty

Course number PHIL-448/547
Prerequisite for this course: 6 cr. In PHIL, 3 of which at the 200-level or Consent of the Department

Winter 2013 – Monday 3:00–5:50 p.m. in CAB 269

Instructor: Prof. Marie-Eve Morin  
Office: ASH 2-65  
Office Hour: Tuesday 2:00–3:00 p.m.  
E-mail: mmorin1@ualberta.ca  
or by appointment

• Course Description:

This course will consist in an intensive study of the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. The first part of the course will focus on Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, and on the phenomenology of the lived body found in that text. In the second part of the course, we will turn to an examination of how this phenomenology changed in Merleau-Ponty's later works to become an ontology of the *flesh*. We will look to Merleau-Ponty's transitional essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," before turning to his last published essay, "Eye and Mind," and to the unfinished text of *The Visible and the Invisible* in order to trace the development and transformation of his philosophy. The aim will be to bridge earlier and later works by understanding the continuities in Merleau-Ponty’s thought as well as the changes and renunciations.

This seminar is organized according to the following aims:

(i) **Weeks 2–8** will concentrate on Merleau-Ponty’s early work, the *Phenomenology of Perception* (published 1945). Our study will include almost all of Part I (on the lived body) and half of Part II (on the perceived world). Our aim will be to read these parts of the *Phenomenology* together closely and to arrive at an understanding of Merleau-Ponty’s concept of the lived body, its dialogue with the world, and the problems that his theory encounters.

(ii) **Week 9** will involve a discussion of Merleau-Ponty’s 1952 essay "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence," published in *Signs* and available on eClass. In this essay, Merleau-Ponty’s intensified reading of Saussurian linguistics and his deepening interest in art become evident. This essay will provide a transition to Merleau-Ponty’s later writings.

(iii) **In weeks 10–13** we will turn to Merleau-Ponty’s later philosophy as presented in two difficult but highly evocative texts. "Eye and Mind" is Merleau-Ponty’s last published text (1960). There he takes up painting not only as a means of interrogating vision and the sensible world, but also as a model for philosophical reflection. Merleau-Ponty’s posthumously published text, *The Visible and the Invisible* (manuscript dates from 1959–1961), is probably one of the most commented but also most challenging of his works. This unfinished text presents the beginnings of a new method of doing philosophy, grounded in what Merleau-Ponty calls the “flesh.”

• Required Texts:

  - ---, "Eye and Mind" in *The Primacy of Perception and other essays on phenomenological psychology, the philosophy of art, history and politics*. Northwestern University Press, 1964. **Electronic copy of the essay available on eClass.**
• Assignments and Grades:

1. Participation (3 x 5% = 15%)
Two or three students will be expected to submit questions on designated weeks. Questions must be posted on eClass by 10 am on the day of the seminar. These questions will form the basis for discussion in the last 30–45 minutes of the seminar. When you sign up for a week, you are committing to submitting a question. No extension or changes of schedule will be allowed.
Questions must be clearly formulated and developed in light of the texts we are reading. They should aim at motivating discussion (i.e., avoid simple textual clarification questions or questions that assume background not shared by others in the course). Questions should be well-elaborated and clear to fellow students. If you appeal to any figure other than Merleau-Ponty, it is your responsibility to explain their thought to your fellow students so that they can engage with your question. You should try, where possible, to raise a theme or issue that you think is important for understanding the texts we are reading. Questions should be primarily focused on that week’s reading and should be between 100–250 words. You will be graded on the thoughtfulness of your question (i.e. both the grasp of the text it displays and its ability to engage with its central theme).
Before coming to class, all students in the course are required to read the questions submitted for that week and to formulate possible responses to them, follow-up questions based on them, or thoughtful directions for their development. Your response/follow-up/thought is meant to prepare you for class discussion of the questions submitted.

2. Glossary Entries of Key Terms (3 x 5% = 15%)
During the semester, you will have to write three “glossary entries” on a key term or set of terms. Each entry should be between 200–300 words and should provide an explanation of the term(s) and situate it in relation to other key terms. Key terms will be given at the end of each class and glossary entries have to be submitted at the beginning of the next seminar.
Key terms will be assigned randomly. At the end of each seminar, I will draw name. When your name comes up you can either pass or pick a set of terms (no picking terms and selling them to your friends after class). If you keep passing and by the end of the term realize that you haven’t done enough, it is going to be your problem!
Write your glossary entries single-spaced with at least 2.5 cm margins on each side. The goal of the glossary entry is to see if you can work out the meaning of a concept using the primary readings. It should provide a clear explanation of the term with concrete examples where possible. You should avoid overinterpreting the text, but should still explain the term in your own words, rather than relying on direct quotations from the text. You should also situate your term in relation to other key terms in the reading and explain their differences and similarities (i.e. phenomenological psychology is a kind of psychology but unlike empirical psychology, etc., etc.) Examples of glossary entries will be provided on eClass before the beginning of the semester.
You should provide proper references for all quotes and all ideas taken from the primary text. I do not recommend the use of secondary sources for this assignment. If you decide to go against my advice and use any other sources than the assigned readings, it is your responsibility to provide proper references for all direct quotations and indirect paraphrases. Failure to do so will lead to suspicion of plagiarism.
To get a grade, you must post your entry (with revisions if you like) on eClass in the glossary section before the end of the last seminar.

3. Final Paper (50%)
The final paper will be due on April 17 and should be between 10–15 pages. I will give you a list of possible topics, but you can also choose your own topic as long as you have it approved by me. Students registered in PHIL-547 are expected to write a slightly longer paper (15–20 pages) addressing more complex issues more in depth.

2. Oral Examination (20%)
The oral examination will take place on the week where the examination is normally scheduled. The exam will last 20–30 minutes. You will receive a set of 8 to 10 questions to prepare beforehand. 30 minutes before your exam, I will tell you which 2 questions you will have to discuss with me. No books, no notes!
• Extensions & Late Papers:
An extension for a paper can only be granted for serious reasons and if you contact me before the due time (that is: not at the beginning of the class on which the paper is due!) Late papers will be penalized 4% (or one letter grade) for every day (24 hours) they are late. Papers will not be accepted more than 5 days after the deadline. No extensions will be granted for Questions or Glossary Entries! If you can’t make it to class, e-mail me your assignment or post it on eClass before the deadline.

• Submission of Assignments:
You can submit your papers in my mailbox in the Department Office ASH 2-40 (note that my mailbox is in ASH 2-43) during regular hours. Make sure it gets stamped with date and time. Don’t slip it under my office door since I will not know when it got there.

• eClass:
To access eClass click on the link on the University webpage and type in your username and password. On eClass you can (among other things):
- post glossary entries and weekly questions
- post comments and questions on the course or on the readings
- get a copy of any handout (including this syllabus and the reading schedule)
- consult the course calendar for deadlines
- check for announcements made in class
- e-mail students in the class
- check your unofficial grades

• Prerequisites:
Please make sure that you have the required prerequisites for this course. Even though you might be able to register on Beartracks without the appropriate prerequisites, failure to comply with prerequisites will create difficulties with your Faculty when you apply for graduation. If you do not have the right prerequisites for this course, please see me immediately!

• Academic Integrity:
The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standard of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour (online at www.ualberta.ca/secretariat/appeals.htm) and avoid any behaviour which could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.
In particular, note that “No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student’s own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study” (Code of Student Behaviour, §30.3.2(1)). This applies to all information you find on the internet, whether it is signed by its author or anonymous.

Policy about course outlines can be found in Section 23.4(2) of the University Calendar
# PHIL 448/547 (Winter 2013): Merleau-Ponty

## Schedule of Readings

(subject to change)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 7</td>
<td>Introduction to Phenomenology and to Merleau-Ponty</td>
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| Jan. 14 | **Phenomenology and The Lived Body**  
**read:** *Phenomenology of Perception*, Author’s Preface (pp. lxx-lxxxv) as well as  
Part One, Introduction (pp. 69-74), Chapter I (excerpts, pp. 78-91), Chapter II (pp. 92-99) |
| Jan. 22 | The Lived Body (cont.) and Habit  
**read:** *PP*, Part One, Chapter III (excerpts, pp. 100-115 and 132-148) |
| Jan. 28 | **Style and Sexuality**  
**read:** *PP*, Part One, Chapter IV (pp. 149-155) and Chapter V (pp. 156-178) |
| Feb. 4 | **Language and Expression**  
**read:** *PP*, Part One, Chapter VI (pp. 179-205) |
| Feb. 11 | **Sensation**  
**read:** *PP*, Part Two, Introduction (pp. 210-213) and Chapter I (pp. 214-252) |
| Feb. 18-22 | Reading Week – No classes |
| Feb. 25 | **Others and the World**  
**read:** *PP*, Part Two, Chapter IV (pp. 359-383) |
| Mar. 4 | “**Indirect Language and the Voice of Silence**”  
in *Signs* (pp. 39-83) |
| Mar. 11 | **Eye and Mind**, sections 1-3  
in *The Primacy of Perception* (pp. 159-178) |
| Mar. 15 | *Last day to withdraw without academic penalty* |
| Mar. 18 | **Eye and Mind**, sections 4-5  
in *The Primacy of Perception* (pp. 178-190) |
| Apr. 25 | “**Interrogation and Intuition**”  
*The Visible and the Invisible*, Chapter 3 (pp. 105-129) |
| Apr. 1 | “**The Intertwining—The Chiasm**”  
*The Visible and the Invisible*, Chapter 4 (pp. 130-155) |
| Apr. 8 | Review, Discussion of Final Exam |

April 19: Papers due at 4:00 p.m.  
April 23-24-25: Oral exams held between 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. each day