

PHI 304: Recent Great Philosophers / Maurice Merleau-Ponty

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Office Hours:

Mon 2-3 pm, Tue 1-2 pm, Wed 2-3 pm, Fri 10-11:30 am or by arrangement

Winter 2006

Mon & Wed 3:00 – 4:15



Situations

Phenomenology was developed as a method for philosophical investigation around the turn of the 20th century by Edmund Husserl. It decisively influenced the development of continental philosophy, giving rise to the movement known as existentialism and to conceptual revolutions in the human sciences. Much current philosophy, psychology, and literary theory descends from the phenomenological movement.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-61) stood at a number of intellectual intersections. He was above all a student of phenomenology, but also wrote on psychology, anthropology, art, literature, and politics. His work invariably exhibits an awareness of how contemporary developments relate to the history of philosophy. Merleau-Ponty was a lifelong associate of the major French existentialists, and was actively involved with Sartre and others in political concerns before and after World War II. His philosophy shows all of these influences, and thus provides an excellent entry point to twentieth and twenty-first century continental philosophy.

Our aim this semester is to enter into this philosophical world via immersion in the work of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Signs

Required Texts:

T. Baldwin, ed. Merleau-Ponty: Basic Writings. Routledge, 2004.

M. Merleau-Ponty, The Primacy of Perception. Northwestern Univ. Press, 1964.

M. Merleau-Ponty, Sense and Non-Sense. Northwestern Univ. Press, 1992.

K. Parker. PHI 304 A: Recent Great Philosophers. Course Pack. Dollar Bill, 2006.

A number of recommended texts have been placed on reserve in the GVSU library. Search under the instructor's name on the Library Course Reserve web page to obtain the complete list.

Figure and Ground

Topical Outline:

1. Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology [2½ weeks]
2. The Existentialist Movement [2 weeks]
3. Psychology and the Ontology of Sense [3½ weeks]
4. Aesthetics [2½ weeks]
5. History, Religion, and the Social Sciences [3½ weeks]

The Prose of the World ---

Readings

Topic 1.

“Editor's Introduction”
 “The Philosopher and His Shadow”
 Edmund Husserl, Ideas II: sections 41-42
 “Preface to Phenomenology of Perception”
 “Merleau-Ponty's Prospectus of His Work”

Writings

Sources

Basic Writings, pp. 1-32
Course Pack
Handout
Basic Writings, part 3
Basic Writings, part 1

Topic 2.

“The Battle over Existentialism”
 Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism”
 Jean-Paul Sartre, “Existentialism”
 Jean-Paul Sartre, “Merleau-Ponty Vivant”

«*précis 1*»

Sense/Non-Sense, ch. 6
Course Pack
Course Pack
Course Pack

«*précis 2*»

Topic 3.

Selections from Phenomenology of Perception
 “The Primacy of Perception and Its
 Philosophical Consequences”
 Ted Toadvine, “Naturalizing Phenomenology”
 “The Intertwining—The Chiasm”
 Luce Irigaray, “The Invisible of the Flesh”

«*précis 3*»

Basic Writings, part 3
Primacy of Perception, ch. 2
Course Pack
Basic Writings, part 5
Course Pack

«*précis 4*»

Topic 4.

“Cezanne's Doubt”
 “Eye and Mind”
 “The Film and the New Psychology”

«*précis 5*»

Basic Writings, part 6
Basic Writings, part 6
Sense/Non-Sense, ch. 4

Topic 5.

“Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man”
 “The Crisis of the Understanding”
 “Author's Preface”
 “The War Has Taken Place”
 “Faith and Good Faith”
 “Man, the Hero”

Primacy of Perception, ch. 3
Sense/Non-Sense, pp. 3-5
Sense/Non-Sense, ch. 10
Sense/Non-Sense, ch 12
Sense/Non-Sense, ch. 13

Consciousness & the Acquisition of Language _____

Assignments:

A number of discussion-reading response summaries, prepared in class	20%
Five <i>précis</i> of assigned readings	5 x 8% each = 40%
Occasional in-class reading quizzes	20%
Final examination	20%

All written work prepared outside of class should be typed, double-spaced, and documented following established scholarly form. *The MLA Handbook, 6th Edition* is the Philosophy Department's preferred style guide.

Sense and Non-Sense _____

Grading:

- A** Outstanding. Work and class participation display thorough mastery of material and genuine engagement with the subject-matter. Writing is exceptionally good. This grade is reserved for those students who attain the highest levels of excellence in thought and scholarship.
- B** Good. Work and class participation display accurate understanding of material. Writing is clear and free of mechanical errors.
- C** Fair. Work and class participation display basic grasp of material, though occasionally with significant misunderstandings or inaccuracies. Writing is acceptable.
- D** Marginal. Work and class participation display a grasp of the material adequate for credit, but the quality of work indicates lack of effort or aptitude. Writing is inadequate for college level work.
- F** Unacceptable. Excessive absences, assignments not completed, or assignments unworthy of credit. Cheating or plagiarism will earn an automatic F for the assignment and/or the course.

Note: Papers encumbered by excessive mechanical, grammatical, or other basic writing errors will not earn a grade higher than "D," whatever other merits the work may have.

The Visible and the Invisible _____

Attendance Policy:

Your regular attendance and participation is expected by the instructor and the other students. You are expected to be here on time, prepared to discuss the assigned readings. I do not distinguish between "excused" and "unexcused" absences. The equivalent of one week's absences will be tolerated without penalty. Each absence beyond that is the basis for a penalty, to be deducted from your final grade.

2 class periods missed – no penalty

3-5 class periods missed – 3% deduction from semester grade for each class missed

More than 5 classes missed – May warrant summary grade of "No Credit" (F)

Note on inclement weather: GVSU very rarely cancels class or closes due to weather. You should assume that class will be held unless you know otherwise from TV, radio, or the GVSU website. You should of course use common sense in deciding whether to travel to Allendale. I generally do not penalize absences if the schools or other public facilities are closed in the area from which you are traveling, even though class is being held.

Lectures on Internal Time-Consciousness _____

Important Dates:

Add / Drop Period Friday Jan. 13, 5pm
Ends:

“Spring” Break: March 5 - 12

75% Tuition Refund Friday Feb. 3, 5pm
Deadline:

Final Examination: Thursday April 27,
8:00 - 9:50am

Withdrawal Friday Mar. 3, 5pm
Deadline:

Commencement: Saturday, April 29