

PHIL 474 Phenomenology

Winter semester 2020: Wednesdays & Fridays 8:35 – 9:55 A.M.
ENGTR (Trottier Building), Rm. 1090

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

The aim of this course is twofold. On the one hand, it is an attempt to read Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* as an instance of phenomenology—in fact, one of the most articulated, coherent and seminal instances of it. On the other hand, it implies an interpretation of phenomenology as a philosophical approach that takes time seriously. Phenomenology, in this view, is not just another claim to some timeless truth, but rather a restless questioning as to why we are fatefully finite and temporal yet in our manifold pursuits perpetually approximate the infinite and eternal.

The main themes of the course are extracted from some paragraphs of *Being and Time*. In addition to those paragraphs, we will also examine the works of other phenomenologists (broadly construed) that focus on those themes. Though it is interesting and often fruitful to locate the agreements and disagreements between different thinkers, what is more important is that we enter the dialogue and grow into practitioners of phenomenology.

My hope is that, by the end of this course, you would be able to develop a habit of thinking phenomenologically, to read any philosophical text with phenomenological care, and to assess contemporary issues, both theoretical and practical, from a phenomenological perspective. All these, as you will learn during the course, means nothing else than staying curious, humble and open in one's thinking while at the same time upholding one's integrity and dignity as a thinker.

REQUIRED COURSE MATERIAL

Heidegger, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York: Harper & Row.

- * Available for \$30.99 at Paragraphe bookstore (2220 Avenue McGill College, H3A 3P9). This is the only book you need to purchase. The rest of the reading material will be made available on MyCourses.
- * The reliable German and French versions (to read in comparison) are:
Heidegger, Martin. 1977. *Sein und Zeit*. Tübingen: Max Niemeyer;
Heidegger, Martin. 1986. *Être et temps*. Traduction par Emmanuel Martineau. Paris: Gallimard.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. **Reading.** This course is heavily based on textual analyses. You are expected to have read the relevant compulsory reading material when coming to class. Please bring the material to class for reference and discussion.
2. **Online discussion (20%).** Each week before **20:00 on Thursday**, you may post a critical question related to that week's reading on MyCourses. The question should be posted as a "Topic" under the corresponding "Forum" under the "Discussions" section. You may also post a response to another student's question before **20:00 the following Tuesday**.
No extension will be granted to these tasks. However, you only have to post **3 questions** and **7 responses** throughout the semester, each of which is worth 2 points.
Discussion posts are graded according to their relevance. They are expected to be substantial, that is, *philosophical*. The aim is that you critically dialogue with the author of the text as well as with your fellow students. A valid question is formulated into 3 sentences. The first clarifies the immediate context from which your question arises. The second presents the question itself. The third specifies why the question is philosophically important. In total, they should not exceed 150 words, and it is a good sign if less is needed. A response should not exceed 150 words, either.
3. **Explication of text (40%).** 1,500 words; due in class on **February 28**. Pick one from the assigned passages by Heidegger (posted by February 14). Include the following elements in your essay: (a) a specification of the immediate context in which the passage appears and the role it plays there; (b) a clarification of the key terms

in the passage; (c) an analysis, sentence by sentence, of the passage, articulating its overall theme and how each sentence contributes to it; (d) a critical response to the main idea expressed in the passage.

Feedback will be provided to everyone.

4. **Reflection paper (40%).** 2,000 words; due **April 30**. Select one from the assigned topics (posted by April 14) and offer an independent reflection on it.

A brief feedback will be provided if (a) you submit before the official deadline (regardless of whether you are granted an extension) AND (b) you specify in the header of your submission that you would like feedback. Otherwise, you will only receive a mark.

- * 3 and 4 are due in hard copies. Please staple all the pages together and put your name and McGill ID on the first page. Set the documents in: **Times New Roman, 12 pt, double-spaced, 1-inch (2.54 cm) margins.**

GRADING CRITERIA

An essay will be graded according to its relevance to the topic, organization of presentation, accuracy of interpretation, carefulness of reading, clarity of expression, rigor of argumentation, and originality of ideas.

The grader(s) do not take off marks from 100%. Rather, they work from a B (~72.5%) and check if the essay deserves more or less. Therefore, it is not our job to convince you that it deserves less; rather, it is your job to convince us, with your essay alone (i.e., not with subsequent explanation), that it deserves more. The following gives you a general sense what each grade means:

- An “A” indicates a substantial grasp of the material, which means that you not only understand it accurately but can also flesh out its nuances, implications and difficulties with the help of a conceptual framework that both makes sense for the author and shows your original reflection.
- A “B” reflects an above-average comprehension of the material without any serious misinterpretation; a “B” work, however, tends toward accurate summary rather than independent analysis. In other words, it tends to give a superficial reading rather than entering the philosophical architecture of the author, figuring out the issue at bottom, and working from within it.
- A “C” suggests a struggle with the material that manages an average, basic comprehension of it but is flawed by some significant misunderstandings or errors.
- A “D” means only a rudimentary comprehension of part of the material with most of the material being misunderstood. This category also includes unnecessarily lengthy and rambling works as well as those failing to adopt a critical stance, i.e., arguing in a partisan, ideological or thoughtless manner.
- An “F” work either totally misses the topic or exhibits no understanding of the material.

LATE POLICY

Late submissions without an extension will be penalized by 5% every day (rounded up) beyond the deadline. Once you finish, email an electronic copy to For example, the reflection paper is due by the end of April 17. If you submit at 8:00 A.M. on April 19, the late penalty will be 10%. If your paper is graded 80%, the actual mark you receive will be $(80\% - 10\% =) 70\%$, contributing $(70\% * 40\% =) 28\%$ to your final score.

If you really need an extension for either of the essays, be sure to meet both of the following requirements: (a) inform me (not the T.A.) by email **before the official deadline**; (b) present a note from a doctor or a family member, specifying the situation—this proof may come in after the deadline. We will then set up a reasonable schedule for you to complete the assignment.

USE OF ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Electronic devices (for example, laptops, tablets) are permitted in lectures provided that (a) they are used for study purposes; (b) they are set to mute; and (c) the content displayed on the screen does not distract people around you.

The lectures use slides set in large font. The slides of a certain lecture will be made available on MyCourses the night before that lecture. If you encounter difficulties looking at the projector screen, feel free to download the slides to your device or print them out before bringing them to the lectures.

EMAIL POLICY

Be sure to include “PHIL 474” in the title of any email communication. Allow 48 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) for a response. Emails that are brief and clear about your demands will get a quicker response.

If you need an extensive reply, consider coming to office hours instead.

READING SCHEDULE

(* = Recommended reading; not mandatory)

(SZ = Sein und Zeit = Being and Time.)

Week 1 (Jan 8, 10) Crisis as forgetfulness [13p]

SZ, §1 (pp. 21-24)

Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, §§1-4 (pp. 3-11)

Week 2 (Jan 15, 17) The question of Being [16p]

SZ, §§2-4 (pp. 24-35)

Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time: Prolegomena*, §13 (excerpt), pp. 128-131

Week 3 (Jan 22, 24) Phenomeno-logy and Da-sein [33p]

SZ, §§5; 7 (pp. 36-40; 49-63)

Husserl, *Ideas I*, §§30-36 (pp. 52-64)

Week 4 (Jan 29, 31) Being-in-the-World [28p]

SZ, §§12-14 (pp. 78-95)

Husserl, "The Life-World and the World of Science", in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Appendix VII (pp. 379-384)

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, "How reflective analysis nevertheless remains abstract", pp. 226-229

Week 5 (Feb 5, 7) Spatiality and the "missing" body [40p]

SZ, §§15-16; 22-23 (pp. 95-107; 134-144)

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, "The body" (excerpt), pp. 140-155

Week 6 (Feb 12, 14) The Self and conformity [35p]

SZ, §§25-27; 35-38 (pp. 149-168; 210-224)

*Ricoeur, *Oneself as Another*, Introduction (excerpt), pp. 1-23

*Kierkegaard, "The Present Age" (excerpt), in *A Kierkegaard Anthology*, edited by Robert Bretall, pp. 260-269

Week 7 (Feb 19, 21) Attunement [34p]

SZ, §§28-30 (pp. 169-182)

Sartre, "The Emotions: Outline of a Theory" (excerpt), in *The Philosophy of Existentialism: Selected Essays*, pp. 233-234; 237-246; 250-253; 257-260

Week 8 (Feb 26, 28) The hermeneutic circle [40p]

SZ, §§31-34 (pp. 182-210)

Heidegger, *Ontology—The Hermeneutics of Facticity*, §§2-3 (pp. 6-16)

*Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, "Heidegger's project of a hermeneutic phenomenology", pp. 255-264

*Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, "Heidegger's disclosure of the fore-structure of understanding", pp. 278-284

Week 9 Study break

Week 10 (Mar 11, 13) Truth vs. certainty [32p]

SZ, §§43-44 (pp. 244-273)

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, "Against psychologism and skepticism", pp. 418-419

*Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art" (excerpt), in *Basic Writings*, edited by David Farrell Krell, pp. 158-197

Week 11 (Mar 18, 20) Finitude [40p]

SZ, §§45-48; 50 (pp. 274-290; 293-296)

Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, §49 (excerpt), pp. 208-209

Edith Stein, "Martin Heidegger's Existential Philosophy" (excerpt), pp. 69-83

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, "Solipsism cannot be overcome 'in God'", pp. 375-376

Week 12 (Mar 25, 27) The “null basis” [17p]

SZ, §§58 (pp. 325-335)

Husserl, *Philosophy of Arithmetic*, “The symbolic representations of numbers” (excerpt), pp. 251-256

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, “Reality and incompleteness of the world”, pp. 345-347

Week 13 (Apr 1, 3) Authenticity and inauthenticity [35p]

SZ, §§54; 61-64 (pp. 312-315; 349-370)

Michael E. Zimmerman, *Eclipse of the Self*, “Everydayness, inauthenticity, and egoism”, pp. 44-52

Week 14 (Apr 8, 10) The (belated) question of time [48p]

SZ, §§65-67; 78-81 (pp. 370-384; 456-480)

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, “There is no time in things”, pp. 433-435

Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, “Sensing” (excerpt), pp. 248-252

*Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, §19b (pp. 256-274)

*Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, Volume 3, §3 (pp. 60-85)

*Claude Romano, *Event and Time*, §§9-10 (pp. 113-128)

Week 15 (Apr 14) Conclusion

(Apr 14 is a Tuesday, but the normal Tuesday schedule of course lectures, labs and conferences will be replaced by a Friday schedule.)

McGill University values academic integrity. All students must, therefore, understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/ for more information).

In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.