

PHI 600: Husserl and Merleau-Ponty  
Syracuse University - Dr. John D. Caputo - Fall, 2009

*Prospectus*

Husserl's phenomenology is central to the study of contemporary continental thought. Virtually every major thinker from Heidegger to Jacques Derrida has passed through the doorway of the phenomenological method. His theories of intentionality, internal time consciousness, constitution, the pure and the empirical ego, active and passive genesis, the natural attitude, the epoche and the reduction, noesis and noema, perception, and his idea of experiential "reason" are groundbreaking openings which provide the entryway to continental thought in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He is also the most scientific and epistemological of the continental philosophers—having begun his work in the foundations of mathematics and logic (which included an exchange with Frege—and thus has often attracted the interest of analytic philosophers). In the first half of the course, we will study selections from three major texts, which take up three central themes and represent three characteristic stages in the development of Husserl's thought. We will begin with the "transcendental turn" taken by Husserl in *Ideas I* (1916), which was of foundational importance for Jean-Paul Sartre. Then we will turn to the central issue of an "intersubjective phenomenology," raised in the *Cartesian Meditations* (1929), which includes the famous account of constitution of the alter ego, which was the point of departure for Levinas's work in ethics. We will conclude with the well known "Life-world phenomenology" in the *Crisis* (mid-1930s), which was of decisive importance to Merleau-Ponty and to existential phenomenology generally. We cannot read these books in their entirety, but we will nonetheless gain a substantial sense of the movement and range of Husserl's thought.

In the second half of the course we will turn to the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty which, following upon Heidegger's reorientation of phenomenology in terms of being-in-the-world, may be seen as first establishing the priority of the lived body in phenomenology. Merleau's work has today acquired a special timeliness in view of the extensive contemporary interest in embodiment and materiality and in view of the challenge to embodied experience presented by advanced information technologies. We will devote four sessions to a reading of *The Phenomenology of Perception* (1962) and three sessions to one of Merleau's most interesting later writings, *The Visible and Invisible* (1959-60), which is well known for its analyses of the "flesh" and of the "chiasma."

*Texts*

**Husserl**

*Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and a Phenomenological Philosophy: First Book: General Introduction to a Pure Phenomenology*, trans. Fred Kersten (Springer/Kluwer paperback)

*Cartesian Meditations*, trans. Dorian Cairns (Springer Classic Titles in Philosophy)

*Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr, Northwestern UP paperback

**Merleau-Ponty**

*The Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2002, paperback)

*The Visible and the Invisible* (Northwestern University Press, 1969, paperback)

### *Advanced Reading*

If you are newcomer to Husserl, some good places to get some background are:

- (1) Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics*, ch. 2 (Indiana UP), which will outline my approach;
- (2) Robert Solomon, *From Rationalism to Existentialism*, the chapter on Husserl is the best intro of its length to Husserl that I know. (Littlefield Adams, 1992). Good place to start. The best of the recent work is Dan Zahavi, *Husserl's Phenomenology* (Stanford University Press, 2002) and Donn Welton, *The Other Husserl* (Indiana UP, 2000). Of these two, Zahavi's is the better place to start. These texts will be placed on reserve in the Bird Library.

### *Course Requirements*

- (1) Seminar Participation (20%)
- (2) 2 Research Papers (40% each)

These papers should be approximately 4,000-4,500 words long.

The topic of the first paper is on Husserl, the second on Merleau-Ponty

#### *Paper #1:*

September 30: Statement of topic due

Oct. 28: Paper due

#### *Paper #2:*

Nov. 11 Statement of topic

Dec. 11 Paper due

## *Syllabus*

September 2	Orientation; <i>Ideas I</i> , Natural Attitude, §§27-32; Principle of all Principles, §24; Consciousness and Natural Reality, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§33-38.
9	Consciousness and Natural Reality, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§39-46 Pure Consciousness, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§47-55
16	Reflection, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§76-80; Time, Matter and Form, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§81-86; Noesis and Noema, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§87-96
23	Language, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§124-127 Objectivity, <i>Ideas I</i> , §§128-35
30	<i>Cartesian Meditations</i> , <i>CM</i> , V, §§42-64 Statement of Topic, Paper #1
October 7	<i>The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology</i> “The Vienna Lecture” (pp. 269-299) and “Origin of Geometry” (pp. 353-378)
14	<i>Crisis</i> , §§1-9
21	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. TBA
28	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. TBA Paper #1 Due
November 4	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. TBA
11	<i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , pp. TBA Statement of Topic, Paper #2
18	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Visible and Invisible</i> , ch 1.
24	Thanksgiving
December 2	<i>Visible and Invisible</i> , ch 2
9	<i>Visible and Invisible</i> , ch 3-5
11	Paper #2 Due