

PHI 315: Recent Great Philosophers
Prof. Vessey
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MAK B-3-201
331-3158

Merleau-Ponty

2:30-3:45 TTh
MAK A-1-111
Office Hours:
TTh 3:45-5:00
F 2-3, and by appt.

Required Texts:

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*
Oliver Sacks, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*

Course Content:

This course will be focused on a close reading of one book: Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (those fluent in French are encouraged to read it in the original French). This book remains one of the most important books in philosophy in the twentieth-century and it is generating greater and greater interest over the last few years thanks to the work of philosophers like Hubert Dreyfus (Berkeley), Sean Kelly (Harvard), Taylor Carmen (Columbia), and Alvin Noë (Berkeley)—in the last two years alone there were almost 150 articles published about Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's book is best known for its phenomenology of embodied consciousness. We will consider some cases of perceptual disorders and draw philosophical conclusions from them about the nature of embodied perception.

Course Method:

Since the focus of the course will be on understanding Merleau-Ponty's views and using them to develop your own arguments for the presentation and the final paper, the assignments in the first part of the course are set up to help you understand Merleau-Ponty's arguments and their philosophical significance. The majority of our time will be spent discussing the texts. Everyone of course is required to do the reading and is expected to participate in the discussion. Thus participation is a significant part of the final grade. The daily attendance/participation grade is: F-not in class; D-in class unprepared; C-in class, prepared, not participating in discussion; B-in class, prepared, participating in discussion; A-in class, prepared, significantly contributing to the discussion. Over four absences will result in the student's final grade being cut in half, so the highest possible final grade would be a C. Since they distract from discussion computers will not be allowed in the classroom.

To help prepare for discussion every student will have to complete two study guides based on the reading from the *Phenomenology of Perception*—one on or before Feb. 15th, one after Feb. 15th. These will have to be emailed to the professor to post on Blackboard *by noon the day before the class the reading will be discussed*.

After completing the *Phenomenology of Perception* our attention will turn to the final paper. The final paper will take an example of a perceptual dysfunction discussed in the writings of Oliver Sacks and draw out the philosophical implications of the dysfunction. Groups of three students will work on the same dysfunction and make a TED-style group presentation about the dysfunction and its possible philosophical implications. Each student will also write a 3,000 word final paper on the

topic. A minimal requirement for university level papers is that they are typed, double-spaced, 12 pt Times or Times/New Roman font, with 1 inch margins. They should also be proofread carefully for typos. A typo policy applies to all papers: the grade on the papers will be lowered one grade (for example, from an A- to a B+) for every four typos. Typos include grammatical errors, spelling errors, improper use of gendered pronouns, and failure to properly cite a quotation. The typo policy applies to the study guides as well as the final paper. Failure to cite differs from plagiarism. Plagiarism is a sign that the student has lost his or her sense for the point of going to college. The student will, at least, get a zero for the assignment and the violation will be reported to the Dean of Students Office. The expectation is that the student will drop the class.

If you have any disabilities that require special accommodation you should speak with Prof. Vessey as soon as possible at the beginning of the term.

Grade Breakdown:

Attendance and Participation: 25%

Study guides: 30%

Presentation: 15%

Final Paper: 30%

Reading Schedule:

Tues. Jan. 11th Introductions

Thurs. Jan 13th Background readings to M-P

Tues. Jan. 18th Preface to *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. vii-xxiv.

Thurs. Jan. 20th “Sensation as a unit of experience”, 3-14 and “Association and the Projection of Memories,” 15-29.

Tues. Jan. 25th “Attention and Judgment” 30-59.

Thurs. Jan 27th “The Phenomenal Field,” 60-74 and “Experience and Objective Thought” 75-83.

Tues. Feb. 1st “The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology”, 84-102 and

“The Experience of the Body and Classical Psychology”, 102-111.

Thurs. Feb. 3rd “The Spatiality of One’s Own Body and Motility” 112-170.

Tues. Feb. 8th “The Synthesis of One’s Own Body,” 171-177.

Preliminary discussion of final papers/presentations

Thurs. Feb. 10th “The Body in its Sexual Being, 178-201.

Tues. Feb. 15 th	“The Body as Expression and Speech, 202-232 and “The Theory of the Body is Already a Theory of Perception” 236-239
Thurs. Feb. 17 th	“Sense Experience”, 240-282
Tues. Feb. 22 nd	“Space”, 283-347
Thurs. Feb. 24 th	“The Thing and the Natural World,” 348-402
Tues. March 1 st	“Other Selves and the Human World”, 403-425. Presentation requests due
Thurs. March 3 rd	“Cogito,” 429-475

SPRING BREAK

Tues. March 15 th	“Temporality,” 476-503
Thurs. March 17 th	“Freedom,” 504-530
Tues. March 22 nd	“Intertwining/Chiasm” (Handout)
Thurs. March 24 th	Irigaray, “The Limits of the Flesh”
Tues. March 29 th	“Eye and Mind”
Thurs. March 31 st	Group Work Day
Tues. April 5 th	Irigaray, “To Paint the Visible”
Thurs. April 7 th	Essays on Merleau-Ponty and Irigaray: Butler, Grosz, Fieldling
Tues. April 12 th	Presentations
Thurs. April 14 th	Presentations
Tues. April 19 th	Presentations
Thurs. April 21 st	Presentations/Review Final Paper/Evaluations

e-book Secondary Sources available through the GVSU Library Website

Taylor Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*
 Stephen Priest, *Merleau-Ponty*
 Thomas Baldwin, *Basic Writings*
 Lawrence Hass, *Merleau-Ponty's Philosophy*
 Taylor Carmen (ed.), *Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*
 George J. Marshall, *A Guide To Merleau-Ponty's Phenomenology of Perception*
 Thomas Baldwin. *Reading Merleau-Ponty: On Phenomenology of Perception*
 Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, *Routledge Philosophy Guide Book to Merleau-Ponty and Phenomenology of Perception*.