

PHIL 690
Fall 2021: 8/31 - 12/6
New North 204
Tuesday 6-8:30pm

Dr. Joel Michael Reynolds
Office location: New North
Office hours: W 3-5 via Zoom
Email: joel.reynolds@georgetown.edu

PHENOMENOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT

Marx claimed that the “first fact of human history is the corporeal organization of the body.” In many respects, this course is an attempt to understand what such a claim might mean—and we will do so by engaging the emerging tradition of *critical phenomenology* in relationship to the theme of embodiment. Despite the fact that Husserl’s vision for phenomenology went through numerous transformations across his lifetime that called into question the primacy of first-person reflection in relation to second-person and social determinates and despite the fact that those who have taken up the mantle of “phenomenology” since Husserl have carved out profoundly distinct paths, recent years have found a concerted community of scholars dissatisfied with much research that passes under the moniker “phenomenology.” Drawing special inspiration from the work of Lisa Guenther and Gayle Salamon, this course takes up the promise of critical phenomenology through an investigation of that which is *critical* about critical phenomenology. After building a foundation in the phenomenological tradition through the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty, we will turn to a host of thinkers who expand and critique that tradition from a wide range of angles and considerations. We will read authors spanning philosophy of disability and disability studies, queer and trans theory, critical philosophy of race, Latinx philosophy, feminist philosophy and feminist theory, as well as other fields and traditions.

At the broadest level, the itinerary of this course is set up to investigate the promise and limits of inquiry anchored in first-person, lived experience in relation to other modes of humanistic and social scientific inquiry. We will be especially concerned with the question of the successes (and failures) of such inquiry to account for experiences pertaining to embodiment that have been historically marginalized, stigmatized, and oppressed.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Routledge, 2013 [1945]).
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press [Philcox translation], 2008 [1952]).
- Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Duke University Press, 2006).
- Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* (SUNY Press, 2016).
- Gayle Salamon, *The Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia* (NYU Press, 2018).
- Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement: Social Death and Its Afterlives* (University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
- All other required readings will be available through Canvas.

RECOMMENDED TEXTS (including original language versions of the above texts, where applicable):

- Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1945). *Phénoménologie de perception*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard.
- Fanon, Frantz (1952). *Peau noire, masques blancs*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.
- Husserl, Edmund (1989). *Ideas pertaining to a pure phenomenology and to a phenomenological philosophy: Second book, Studies in the phenomenology of constitution* [aka Ideas 2], trans. R. Rojcewicz and A. Schuwer. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

- ----- (1991). [HUA 4] *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie. Zweites Buch: Phänomenologische Untersuchungen zur Konstitution*. Hrsg. von Marly Biemel. Nachdruck.
- Martin Heidegger (1988). *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP.
- ----- (1997). [GA 24] *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie*. ed. F.-W. von Herrmann, 3rd edn. Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann.
- Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. Any version is fine, but I prefer the Cress translation. You can find the original Latin edition of 1641 as well as the Duc de Luynes French translation of 1647 [here](#).
- Iris Marion Young (2005). *On Female Body Experience: "Throwing Like a Girl" and Other Essays* (Oxford: OUP).
- *Feminist Phenomenology Futures* (2017). Ed. H. Fielding and D. Olkowski (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP).
- *Phenomenology and the Political* (2016), Ed. W. Gurley and G. Pfeifer (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield).
- *Feminist Phenomenology and Medicine* (2015). Ed. K. Zeiler and L. Folkmarsen (New York: SUNY).
- *Living Alterities: Phenomenology, Embodiment, and Race* (2014). Ed. E. Lee (ed.) (New York: SUNY).

COURSE SCHEDULE:

8/31: Linda Alcoff, “The Problem of Speaking for Others”

9/7: Descartes *Meditations*, 1 & 2 + Husserl, *Ideas* 2, Part II, §35–42, pp. 151–169 [German: 143–161]
+ Heidegger GA 24, §1-5 (focus on §5) [German: 1-31].

9/14: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Preface + Intro (1-67) [Fr: 7-91]

9/21: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Part 1 (67-205) [Fr: 95-241] + Iris Marion Young, “Throwing Like A Girl”

9/28: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Part 2 (209-383) [Fr: 245-424] + Reynolds, “Merleau-Ponty, World-Creating Blindness, and the Phenomenology of Non-Normative Bodies”

10/5: Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Part 3 (387-483) [Fr: 427-521].

10/12: No class. Take a breather. CLOSE READING DUE.

10/19: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Intro, Chp. 1 and Chp. 4. + Alia Al-Saji, “A Phenomenology of Hesitation: Interrupting Racializing Habits of Seeing”

10/26: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Chp. 5, 6, and 8 + Helen Ngo, “The White Gaze, Being-Object, and Intercorporeity: Casting Anew the Ontological Violence of Racism” (from *Phenomenology and the Political*)

11/2 Mariana Ortega, *In-Between: Latina Feminist Phenomenology, Multiplicity, and the Self* [read all]

11/9: S. Kay Toombs, “The Lived Experience of Disability” + Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, “Misfits” + Vincent Fernandez, “Phenomenology, Mental Illness, and the Intersubjective Constitution of the Life World” (from *Phenomenology and the Political*)

11/16: Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* [read all] **LIT REVIEW DUE THIS WEEK**

11/23: Gayle Salamon, *The Life and Death of Latisha King: A Critical Phenomenology of Transphobia* [read all] + Gayle Salamon, “What’s Critical about Critical Phenomenology?”

11/30: Lisa Guenther, *Solitary Confinement*, read all (but if you run out of time, focus on 3-64, 101-160, and 221-256) + Andrea Pitts, “Examining Carceral Medicine through Critical Phenomenology”

TERM PAPER DUE FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10

GRADING

Attendance/Participation	200 (20%)
Presentation	200 (20%)
Close Reading	50 (5%)
Lit Review	100 (10%)
<u>Term Paper</u>	<u>450 (45%)</u>
TOTAL	1000 (100%)

- **Attendance & Participation**

Attendance and engagement in discussions is mandatory. Assuming just one mtgn per week, students are allowed to miss 1 class without penalty. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class for whatever reason, please talk with me during the first week of class so we can develop a plan to ensure you still get participation points.

- **Presentation**

Each student will give a 20 minute, highly polished presentation followed by 5 minutes of Q&A. I will provide a handout with details on how this is graded.

- **Close Reading Assignment**

You will choose one paragraph (ideally no more than 6-8 sentences) from the assigned readings. You will then closely read that passage, annotating heavily as you work and rework the passage. You will then turn in to me a document consisting of two parts: 1) a photocopy of your annotated page/pages and 2) a 1000-word minimum reflection based on your close reading of the passage in question. For those unfamiliar with this method/genre, we will do a practice close reading in class, and I will provide a very detailed handout with tips and suggestions.

- **Lit Review**

Literature reviews are an essential aspect of professional scholarship. Around halfway through the semester, we will talk about your plans for the final paper. Based on that discussion, we will come up with a (short, manageable) list of texts for your lit review. I will provide a handout detailing how to

carry out a good lit review as well as how to write it up for this assignment. The lit review will be due three weeks prior to the deadline of the term paper.

- **Term Paper**

I am very happy to look over drafts of your term paper, but I draw the cut-off for this at 10 class days before the due date. All papers should be 15-20 pages and turned in via e-mail. Students have two options for this assignment. (1) You can treat this as a typical final research paper. This option gives you more leeway in how you structure the paper and the sort of engagement you have with secondary literature. (2) You can treat this as a short journal article, and you will specify the journal to which you imagine the paper being submitted. I will give you feedback as if I were an anonymous reviewer for that journal. This is ideal for students who want to get more detailed training on how to undertake and succeed at professional scholarship.

PAPER REQUIREMENTS

Unless specified otherwise, papers should be written with double-spaced, Times New Roman, 12 point font (10 point font for footnotes), 1" margins at top and bottom, and 1.25" margins on the sides. Each paper must cite and engage a minimum of 5 scholarly sources. Citations should follow the format specified by the CMS (Chicago Manual of Style). I am fine with either footnote or author-date versions of CMS (if you pick option 2 for the term paper, follow the style preference of the journal for which you are writing your paper). If you plan to continue doing research in the academy, I strongly recommend taking the time to learn how to use applications like Endnote or Zotero because these program will generate citations for you in any style, and over the course of the semester (and your life), you will spend far less time stressing over citations. If you don't wish to do that, I'd suggest utilizing a guide such as Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th Ed., ISBN: 0226823377.

HEALTH & SICKNESS POLICY

Getting colds, injuries, and having mental health issues is a part of life. Many of these are manageable, but others are not. For example, if you have a temperature, you may have the flu, which is highly contagious. Please consider the well-being of others (including your professors), and if you feel sick, and especially and specifically if you have a temperature, go to student health services to get a diagnosis and medicine if necessary. If you do have the flu, email me about what is going on, but please **do not come to class or office hours** until you have been cleared by a medical professional that you are no longer contagious.

ACCESSIBILITY

I am passionate about the principles of universal design in pedagogy, which include flexibility, equitability, tolerance for error and encouragement of response to it, and productive, albeit critical feedback loops. Syllabi and courses are designed with all students in mind, but we are not all the same. Your well-being and success in this course are important to me, and I do my best to work with each student individually so that the course and its requirements fit with their abilities. You are invited to comment at any time during the semester (in person or by email) about the ways in which the space, assignments, curriculum and other key elements of the course are contributing to or impeding inclusion and accessibility. I recognize that there are *multiple* ways to learn and that this multiplicity should be acknowledged in the design and structure of university courses and the evaluation of their participants. Thus, I encourage students registered in the course to discuss their

learning styles and any other relevant details with me during my office hours or, if necessary, at another arranged time, during the first week of class.

Access is a social justice issue, and individual accommodations are more often than not a second-best effort to address access. Having said that, under university policy, for an accommodation to be *officially* considered, a student must register with the office of disability services. I strongly suggest researching the benefits of this office, and I am happy to help you in navigating such structures at this institution.

PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING

I expect all students in this course to adhere to the Honor Code.

RESOURCES

- Please see my Canvas “Resources” page for a comprehensive list of resources at the university ranging from help with writing to mental health counseling.
- **Me:** if you find yourself needing assistance with something, please do not hesitate to contact me via email.