

Introduction to Phenomenology Spring 2015

Instructor: Sharon Rider
Office Hours: by appointment
Phone: 018 471 7369
Email: Sharon.Rider@filosofi.uu.se

REQUIRED TEXTS

- i) Dermot Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology* (Routledge, 2000).
- ii) Compendium available at the Department of Philosophy at the start of the course, including selections from the writings of, among others, Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer and Merleau-Ponty.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Phenomenology is considered by many to have been one of the most significant intellectual movements of the 20th century, having enormous influence on the humanities and social sciences since its initial beginnings in the writings of the German philosopher Edmund Husserl. Later intellectual movements such as existentialism, hermeneutics, and deconstruction have their roots in phenomenology, and many of the most notable names in Continental thought, such as Heidegger, Sartre, Derrida, Levinas, Arendt, and Foucault had deep connections, in one way or another, with the phenomenological tradition. This course will study the development of phenomenology from its inception, and trace its evolution through a study of important contributions by key figures, but the focus will not be historical as such. Rather, we will concentrate on the method itself, and what distinguishes it from other past and current approaches to philosophical problems. What is phenomenology? How is it practiced? What distinguishes this way of doing philosophy from other past and current approaches to philosophical problems? What are the possibilities and limitations of phenomenological reflection? How are we to understand such fundamental notions as intentionality, temporality, subjectivity, objectivity, perception, memory, intuition, reason, truth, and evidence?

Upon completion of the course, the student is expected to:

- i) have a working knowledge of the fundamental concepts and methodology of “classical” Husserlian phenomenology and its relation to other philosophical methods, past and present;
- ii) be able to account for the key writings of major figures in the phenomenological movement;
- iii) be able to identify and compare central concepts and methods used by these major figures, and account for the development of phenomenology and its aftermath;

iv) assess the strengths and weaknesses of phenomenology as a philosophical method.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. class participation/attendance (20% of grade)
2. class presentation of paper (15 % of grade)
3. one mid-term paper (4 pages, 25% of grade)
4. one final paper (8 pages, 40% of grade)

Class Participation/Attendance: Active participation, which naturally presupposes attendance, is a requirement. The students are expected to read all assigned material prior to class, and participate productively and professionally in class discussions, in part, by commenting upon each other's presentations. A number of the reading assignments in this class are rather long and quite dense, and will likely require more than one reading. Students should be prepared to commit the time required for preparation. There will be seven three-hour meetings (see schedule below). Missing more than two seminars (including very late arrivals and/or very early departures) will result in a 20% reduction in grade (making a grade of VG attainable only if both essays and the class presentation receive perfect marks. See section on grading below). Makeup work for missed seminars will be at the instructor's discretion.

Class Presentation: At the first meeting, we will circulate a sign-up sheet on which you will select a chapter from Moran's book, together with a relevant selection from the compendium, and a date for your presentation. During the class period that you have chosen, you will give a 15-minute presentation of the central problems and themes of the readings, and lead a brief discussion about their implications and relation to other ideas and issues addressed in the course. Presentations will be graded on the basis of the accuracy of your presentation (your own understanding of the concepts in question), the clarity of your expression (how well you express this understanding to others), and your ability to lead discussion and field questions about the concepts presented (your ability to think "on your feet" about these issues). The use of an overhead and the distribution of handouts can be arranged if prior notice of the need is given.

Midterm paper: The first, shorter paper is to be submitted no later than May 19th. The midterm paper is best seen as the final and revised version of the oral presentation, with stricter scholarly requirements (including appropriate references to both primary and, where applicable, secondary literature, an adequate bibliography and use of footnotes, etc.). Extensions will naturally be granted in the case of genuine, documented emergencies.

Final paper: A discussion of suitable topics for a final paper will take place at the third meeting, in conjunction with the deadline for the midterm paper. The topic of the final paper should be problem-oriented, rather than exegetical, and it should not overlap more than incidentally with that of the midterm paper. The final paper is to be submitted no later than June 4th. Extensions will be granted in the case of emergencies, as above.

GRADING

The grades for the course are Pass (G), Fail (U) or Pass with Distinction (VG). ECTS grades can be given to those who wish. Grades will be determined as follows, out of 10 possible points: VG (A-B) = 8-10; G (C-E) = 5-7; U (F, Fx) = <5

SCHEDULE

Seminar 1: 10-13, May 4th, Eng 2/K-1023
Discussion of Course, Assignment of Presentations, Introductory Lecture
(Chaps. 1 & 2)

Seminar 2: 10-13, May 11th, Eng 2/K-1023
Husserl: the *Logical Investigations* (Chap. 3); Transcendental Phenomenology (Chap. 4); the Crisis of the European Sciences (Chap. 5)

Seminar 3: 10-13, May 19th, Eng 2/1024 (Midterm paper deadline)
Heidegger: *Being and Time* (Chaps. 6 & 7)

Seminar 4: 10-13, May 21st, Eng 2/1024
Gadamer: Philosophical Hermeneutics (Chap. 8); Arendt: the Phenomenology of the Public Sphere (Chap. 9)

Seminar 5: 10-13, May 26th, Eng 16/0041
Levinas: the Phenomenology of Alterity (Chap. 10); Sartre: Existential Phenomenology (Chap. 11)

Seminar 6: 10-13, June 1st, Eng 2/K-1022
Merleau-Ponty: the Phenomenology of Perception (Chap. 12); Derrida: From Phenomenology to Deconstruction (Chap. 13)

Seminar 7: 13-16, June 4th, Eng 2/K-1024 (Final paper deadline)
Remaining Presentations; Closing Discussion