Phenomenology and Hermeneutics
Philosophy 4193.10
CRN: 20423
TTh 12:45-2:00 p.m.
Spring 2013
Rome 352

Professor Gail Weiss
Office: Phillips 524
Off.Hrs: T Th 2:30-3:45 p.m.
and by appt.
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Course Description: This course offers an intensive introduction to the
phenomenological and hermeneutic traditions in philosophy through some of their best-
known representatives: Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer, Sartre, Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty,
and Ricoeur. Central topics of discussion include consciousness, anguish/anxiety, lived
experience, historical interpretation, the Other, death, and ambiguity.

Assigned Texts:

Beauvoir, Simone de. The Ethics of Ambiguity (E)
Caputo, John. Radical Hermeneutics (R)
Gadamer, Hans-Georg. Truth and Method (T)
Heidegger, Martin. Being an Time (B)
Husserl, Edmund. Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a
Phenomenological Philosophy (First Book) (I)
Sartre, Jean-Paul. Being and Nothingness (BN)

There are also several required readings located under Electronic Reserves (ER) on our
Blackboard website by the following authors: Husserl, Heidegger, Caputo, Gadamer,
Merleau-Ponty, and Ricoeur.

Course Requirements:
Note: All course requirements must be completed to receive a passing grade in this
course.

Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance is essential for this course, which is
structured as a seminar. Quality, rather than quantity, will be the basis for evaluation of
classroom participation. The readings are extremely challenging and we will be focusing
on explicating them together in class in order to develop critical interpretations of the
texts, and the methodologies employed by the authors. Discussion Thread postings on
our Blackboard website offer an additional opportunity for classroom participation.

Presentations and Critical Questions (CQs): Each student is required to give one in-
class presentation and to write one critical question based on the material covered in the
presentation. A sign-up sheet for presentations and CQs will be passed out the first day
of class and once people have signed up, the schedule will be posted on our Blackboard
website. The presentation and CQs will be on the same reading but the assignments are
different. Please read carefully through the descriptions of both below:

Presentation: Each student will give a 20 minute presentation, usually at the outset of
class, that summarizes the major issues covered in a reading assigned for that day.
Presentations should conclude with 2-3 questions based on the reading for class discussion.

**CQs:** The critical question should be posted as a Discussion Thread on our Blackboard website (identified by your name and the author and reading you are discussing) by 5 p.m. the day after the presentation has been given. Critical questions should consist of no more than 2 pages (double-spaced) and should have two components: 1) an explication of a single issue, problem or concept raised in the text; 2) your critical perspective on this topic. Critical questions are therefore distinct from the presentations and should not summarize the reading as a whole.

**Term Paper Proposal:** Three page term paper proposals with a fourth page consisting of a working bibliography will be due on **Tuesday, March 26th.** Each person will choose her/his own paper topic and should meet with the professor either the week before or the week after Spring Break to get it approved. Proposals should indicate the central issue(s) to be discussed as well as a substantive account of which class author(s) will contribute to your analysis. **Note: Outside readings/authors may be incorporated but the paper must be focused on one or more primary readings done in this course this semester.**

**Term Paper:** There will be a 10 page term paper due on the last day of class, **Thursday, April 25th.** 1-2 paragraph abstracts of term papers should be posted on Blackboard by **Tuesday, April 30th.**

**Final Exam:** On the last day of class (April 25th), a take-home final will be passed out. **The final will consist of 4 three page (typed and double-spaced) essays.** The completed final must be emailed to Professor Weiss (gweiss@gwu.edu) by 5 p.m. on **Tuesday, May 7th.**

**Breakdown of Final Grade:**

10% Attendance and Participation  
20% Presentation and Critical Question  
10% Term Paper Proposal  
30% Term Paper  
30% Final Exam

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**
1) At the end of this course, students will be acquainted with some of the most important concepts and issues that have emerged from two major theoretical approaches within the 19th and 20th century continental philosophical tradition, phenomenology and hermeneutics. They will be able to understand and discuss the work of leading authors within each tradition, and will be able to
recognize phenomenological and/or hermeneutical methodologies when they are being utilized by other philosophers.

2) The written assignments for the course will accomplish the following interrelated objectives: a) students will demonstrate the ability to critically analyze a particular set of issues raised by a course author; b) students will understand the theoretical foundations for a given author's views; 3) student will gain the necessary expertise to evaluate the merits of a particular phenomenological or hermeneutical framework; 4) students will defend their views by developing their own philosophical arguments.

3) At the conclusion of the course, students will be able to produce an original phenomenological and/or hermeneutical essay that applies their knowledge of one or more key figures within phenomenology and hermeneutics to a specific philosophical concern of their choosing.

4) After taking Phil 4193, students will be able to apply core concepts from the course to the study of new topics and new authors in the phenomenological and hermeneutical traditions.

**Academic Integrity:** All class members are expected to uphold the University Honor Code: "Academic dishonesty is defined as cheating of any kind, including misrepresenting one's own work, taking credit for the work of others without crediting them and without appropriate authorization, and the fabrication of information." For the remainder of the code, see: [http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html](http://www.gwu.edu/~ntegrity/code.html)

**Students have the following resources available to them at GW:**
Disability Support Services: (DSS): (202) 994-8250, Marvin Center Suite 242 [http://gwwired.gwu.edu/dss](http://gwwired.gwu.edu/dss)
University Counseling Center (UCC): (202) 994-5300 [http://gwwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices](http://gwwired.gwu.edu/counsel/CounselingServices/AcademicSupportServices)

**Security:** In the unlikely event of an emergency, the class is to remain in place unless our building is affected, in which case we will follow the evacuation procedures for our building, and will predetermine where to rendezvous to seek shelter.
Syllabus

January
15: Introduction to Course

17: Husserl, Part Two Chapter One: “The Positing Which Belongs to the Natural Attitude and its Exclusion” and Chapter Two: “Consciousness and Natural Actuality” Sections 27-35, ps. 51-73 (I)

22: Husserl Part Two Chapter Two, “Consciousness and Natural Actuality” continued Sections 36-46, ps. 73-104 (I)

24: Husserl, Part Three Chapter Three: “Noesis and Noema” Sections 87-96, ps. 211-235 (I)

29: Husserl, Book Two, Section Two Chapter One: “The Pure Ego” Sections 22-29 ps. 103-127 (ER)


February
5: Husserl, “Horizons” Sections 19 and 20, 108-112 and “Empathy and the Constitution of the Other” Sections 42-49, ps. 135-160 (ER)

7: Heidegger, Being and Time: Introduction, ps. 1-37 (B)

12: Heidegger, “The Worldliness of the World” Part 1 Division 1 Chapter Three, ps. 63-110 (B)

14: Heidegger, “Being-in-the-World as Being-with and Being a Self: The ‘They’” Part 1 Division 1 Chapter 4, ps. 111-126 (B)

19: Heidegger, “Being-in as Such” Part 1 Division 1 Chapter 5, ps. 127-173 (B)

21: Heidegger, “The Possible Being-a-Whole of Dasein and Being-Toward-Death” Division 2 Chapter 1, ps. 227-255 (B)

28: Sartre, "The Ontological Proof" "Being-in-itself" "The Question" "Negations" 21-30, 33-44 (BN)

March
5: Sartre, "The Origin of Nothingness" 56-85 (BN)
7: Sartre, "Bad Faith," ps. 86-116 (BN)

11-15: Spring Break

19: Sartre, "The Look" 340-381 (BN)
21: Sartre, "The Look" 381-400 (BN)

26: Merleau-Ponty, "What is Phenomenology?" Preface to Phenomenology of Perception lxx-lxxxv (ER)
3 page Term Paper Proposals plus Working Bibliography Due Today

28: Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech" from Phenomenology of Perception, 179-205 (ER)

April
2: Merleau-Ponty, “Freedom” Phenomenology of Perception 458-483 (ER)
4: Beauvoir, "Ambiguity and Freedom" "Personal Freedom and Others" 7-73 (E)
9: Beauvoir, "Ambiguity" and "Conclusion" 129-159 (E)
11: Ricoeur, "Existence and Hermeneutics" 3-24 (ER)

16: Gadamer, “Elements of Theory of Hermeneutic Experience” Part II Chapter 4 Truth and Method, ps. 268-306


23: Caputo, “Repetition and Constitution: Husserl’s Proto-Hermeneutics” Part 1 Chapter 2, ps. 36-59 (R)


Term Papers Due
Final Examination passed out

26: Post One Paragraph Abstracts of Term Papers on Blackboard by today
May
7: Email Final Examination to Professor Weiss (gweiss@gwu.edu) by 5 p.m. today