

MEANING AND BEING

Fall 2012, Phil 327

Office Hours: Tues, Thurs: 1-3 and by apt.

Office: Wheatley 5-008

Professor Steven Levine

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Course Description:

In this class we will explore some important movements from 20th Century Continental Philosophy, focusing especially on Phenomenology (Husserl) and Existential Phenomenology (Sartre and Merleau-Ponty). We will first read Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* and examine his form of Transcendental Phenomenology. We will then read parts of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* and Merleau-Ponty's masterpiece *Phenomenology of Perception*. Both take issue with Husserl's Transcendental Phenomenology by arguing that it involves a suspect subject/object distinction. Both try to show, in different ways, that meaning and significance are not constituted by a transcendental subject situated outside of the world (as Husserl thought), but emerges from our 'intimate inherence' in the world, from our 'being-in-the-world'. Specifically, Sartre argues that Husserl's theory of the Ego is mistaken, that the I does not, as Husserl thinks, always accompany our thinkings and doings. This simple fact has deep ramifications for Sartre, leading to a new way of understanding being, nothingness, human freedom, and the relation of self and other. Merleau-Ponty, in contrast, argues that Husserl overlooks the embodied nature of human perception and understanding. His goal is to bring embodiment back into the philosophical picture to make sense of the way subjects get a pre-objective grip on the world and others. Meeting this goal will then allow us to understand Merleau-Ponty's main criticism of Sartre: that freedom, while real, is always situated freedom.

Required Texts (available at the bookstore)

- Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (CM)
- Sartre, *Basic Writings* (SBW)
- Merleau-Ponty, *Basic Writings* (MPBW)

Recommended Text (available at the bookstore)

- David Cerbone, *Understanding Phenomenology*

Reliable Secondary Sources

Overviews of Phenomenology and Existential Phenomenology:

- Dermot Moran, *Phenomenology*
- Simon Glendinning, *In the Name of Phenomenology*
- David E. Cooper, *Existentialism*
- Jon Stewart, *The Debate between Sartre and Merleau-Ponty*

Husserl:

- Dan Zahavi, *Husserl*
- R. Bernet, I. Kern, and E. Marbach, *An Introduction to Husserlian Phenomenology*
- Dermot Moran, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*
- Aron Gurwitsch, *Studies in Phenomenology and Psychology*
- Paul Ricoeur, *Husserl: An Analysis of his Phenomenology*

Sartre

- Sebastian Gardner, *Sartre's Being and Nothingness*
- Gregory McCulloch, *Using Sartre*
- Katherine J. Morris, *Sartre*
- Christina Howells ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Sartre*

Merleau-Ponty

- Taylor Carmen, *Merleau-Ponty*
- Eric Matthews, *The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty*
- Renaud Barbaras, *The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*
- Taylor Carmen ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Merleau-Ponty*

Course Outline (This is subject to revision)

Week	Date	Class Theme and Activities	Assignment
Week 1	Sep. 4-6	Review of Syllabus and Introduction	Descartes, Meditation 1 and 2, <i>found on my website</i> Husserl, CM, Introduction
Week 2	Sep. 11-13	Husserl: Phenomenological Method	CM, Meditation One
Week 3	Sep. 18-20	Husserl: Intentionality	CM, Meditation Two
Week 4	Sep. 25-27	Husserl: The Ego	CM, Meditation Four
Week 5	Oct. 2-4	Husserl: Self and Other	CM, Excerpts from Meditation Five
Week 6	Oct. 9-11	Sartre: Phenomenology and Ontology	SBW: 70-73, 75-87 (<i>skip</i> section II)
Week 7	Oct. 16-18	Sartre: Being and Nothingness Oct. 18th: First paper due	SBW: 108-119, 138-147
Week 8	Oct. 23-25	Sartre: Freedom and Bad Faith	SBW: 181-190, 206-220
Week 9	Oct. 30, Nov. 1	Sartre: The Other	SBW: 224-243

Week 10	Nov. 6-8	Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology <i>Nov. 8th: Course Withdraw Deadline</i>	MPBW: Preface, 63-78 MPBW: Part 1: Introduction, 79-84
Week 11	Nov. 13-15	Merleau-Ponty: The Body and Motor Intentionality	MPBW: The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility, 101-124
Week 12	Nov. 20	Merleau-Ponty: Self and Other <i>Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	MPBW: Other Selves and the Human World, 146-164
Week 13	Nov. 27-29	Merleau-Ponty: Situated Freedom	MPBW: Freedom, 209-233
Week 14	Dec. 4-6	Merleau-Ponty: The Visible and the Invisible	MPBW: The Intertwining —The Chiasm, 248-270
Week 15	Dec 11	OPEN CLASS	

Assessable Tasks

1. Class Participation, 15%
2. A seven page paper, **due Oct. 18th**, 35%
3. A 12 page final paper **due on Dec. 16th**, 50%

There are two papers in this class. The first paper is expository. In it you will attempt to explain as clearly as you can certain features of Husserl's philosophy. Here the goal is not to argue for a thesis, but to demonstrate understanding of extremely difficult philosophical material. I will hand out the topics for this paper. The second paper is argumentative. In this paper you will formulate a position and then argue for it. This paper must involve the work of either Sartre or Merleau-Ponty (or both). We will discuss the nature of this paper later in the semester.

Attendance Policy

Your presence in class is a minimum condition of your success in this course. Attendance as well as lateness will be noted and factored into your final grade, as follows:

- 4 absences: final grade lowered by ½ grade (e.g. from B- to C+)
- 5 absences: final grade lowered by a full grade (e.g. from B- to C-)
- 6 absences: failure; no credit given

In general, the distinction between “excused” and “unexcused” absences is not recognized (an absence is an absence). Repeated lateness in arriving to class will count as an absence.

Other Important Information

1. Unless otherwise noted readings, handouts, assignments, and other announcements will be posted on my website which can be reached by clicking the link on my faculty page located on the UMB philosophy department website or at this address:
<http://faculty.www.umb.edu/steven.levine/>
2. You need to have a working UMB email so that I can contact you through the wiser system.

3. The readings for this class are listed above by the week. If homework is not explicitly assigned in class, these readings are your homework. The reading schedule may change due to events. If it does I will update the schedule on my website.
4. I only give incompletes if there is a really good reason like family emergency.
5. Unless an arrangement is made with me, a paper will be penalized a whole grade if it is up to one week late. Thereafter, it will be penalized a whole grade each additional week that it is late.
I do not accept emailed papers unless I explicitly agree to it.

Policy on Academic Honesty

Plagiarism involves presenting someone else's work as your own. You need to be careful to avoid even the appearance of plagiarism. This means that if you ever use a phrase, a sentence, or an idea from a text, you must provide a citation. If it is something we read for the class, it is acceptable to give the source and page number. E.g.: (Rawls, "The Justification of Civil Disobedience, p. 100). When utilizing other material, you must provide full bibliographic information of that text. If you don't provide appropriate citations, this will affect your grade. If you have gone so far as to misrepresent another person's work as your own by copying from another's paper, using a paper writing service, copying something off the web or out of a book or in any other way I will assume you intend to commit plagiarism and will give you an 'F.' The current Code of Student Conduct which includes information about academic dishonesty is available online at:

<http://www.umb.edu/academics/undergraduate/office/students/CodeofStudentConduct.html>

Students with Disabilities

If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please contact the Ross Center for Disability Services. The Ross Center for Disability Services is located in the Campus Center, UL 211. You can contact them by calling: 617-287-7430 or sending an email to: ross.center@umb.edu. Once you have received your accommodation letters, please meet with me to discuss the provisions of those accommodations as soon as possible.