

<b>Course:</b>	PHIL 3009A	<b>Meeting Times:</b>	T & Th, 2:35 - 3:55 PM
<b>Term:</b>	Winter 2019	<b>Class Location:</b>	University Center 279
<b>Instructor:</b>	Dr. Casey Ford	<b>Email:</b>	casey.ford@carleton.ca
<b>Office Hours:</b>	Tues. 1:00 – 2:00 PM	<b>Office:</b>	3A38 Paterson Hall



## Topics in European Philosophy: The Body

For much of the history of philosophy, the body has been understood either as a matter of physical extension in space (as opposed to the power of the mind), or as the site of “passions” that affect and limit the freedom of the thinking subject. In both cases, the body is the reality through which we engage with and are in continuity with the external world. If a privilege has been given to rationality and cognition over embodied life, it is in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that a special philosophical concern with the body emerged. This course will study philosophical conceptions of the “body” in the tradition of European philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Our specific focus will be how the body is understood as a domain in which subjectivity is realized, and not merely an instance of objective material. As the site of subjective experience, we will trace a discourse around the body ranging from the source of our sense of selfhood, our experience of otherness, and the object of social and political control. The core of our course will be devoted to closely studying two major works: Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s seminal phenomenological treatise *Phenomenology of Perception* (1945) and Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). While Merleau-Ponty establishes the fundamental relationship between human subjectivity and its embodied existence, Deleuze and Guattari shift our focus away from the human subject to the movements of becoming that constitute the body as such. In the final part of the course, we will examine a number of thinkers (Foucault, Federici, Fanon, and Cixous) that explore the ways the body is subjected to forms of power, control, and the production of racial and gendered identities, while also disclosing a power of creativity and freedom.

### Course Texts

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Required texts for purchase:

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| • Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i>     | Routledge 2012: trans. D. Landes | 9780415834339 |
| • Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i> | Minnesota: trans. B. Massumi     | 9780816714028 |

Selections from following works available digitally online:

- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*
- Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation*
- Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*
- Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa”

## Course Format & Goals

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This course will be a combination of lectures, group discussion, and student-directed teaching activities. Each meeting will be devoted to a portion of text specified in the reading schedule below. Together we will work through the problems and questions motivating each work, explain their important ideas, critically assess their arguments, and think about the significance of these ideas and arguments in the context of the history of philosophy.

As an intermediate seminar in philosophy, the goals of this course will be: (1) to do close textual analyses of some of the most important and influential works in 20<sup>th</sup> century European philosophy, (2) to gain an understanding of the general problems and course of this tradition, (3) to write clear and sophisticated explanatory essays in philosophy, and (4) to identify and articulate philosophical problems and questions to begin individual research.

Reading and writing will be significant components of this course. Students will be asked to read between 30-40 pages per week, and write between 22-25 pages throughout the semester. Extensive feedback will be provided to assist you in improving your writing, and I am happy to work closely with each of you inside and outside of the classroom.

## Assignments

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### **Participation (20%)**

General Responsibilities. The study of philosophy is an essentially collaborative practice. It requires one to encounter the ideas of another and to develop responses that are personal, critical, and charitable. Active participation in the classroom, in relation both to the texts being studied and your colleagues, will be a significant part of a rewarding experience in this course. Serious philosophical involvement will mean making your ideas, interests, and interpretations known, and in working with others to challenge them. It is your responsibility as a student to determine the level and quality of your participation, and to communicate regularly with the instructor about the required work to receive the grade you desire. Students will be expected to attend *all* class sessions. Moreover, you will be expected to come to class having read the assigned material with careful notes from your readings.

Critical Questions. Your participation grade will involve completing 4 Critical Questions during the final weeks of the semester. Your task is to contextualize, formulate, and respond to a philosophical question/problem about the reading for the week in which the question can be posed during discussion. They should be 1/2 single-spaced page. See assignment sheet for instructions.

### **Explication Essays (2 Essays & 1 Revision Assignment: 50% total)**

To “explicate” something literally means to unfold it. For these assignments, you will be given short passages or complicated ideas that you must unpack in clear, nuanced, and sophisticated explanations. You will be asked not to consult or reference secondary scholarship and to focus on the primary text as something to interpret on your own. For your first essay, you will be asked to revise and expand the assignment based on instructor and peer feedback. This revision work will be evaluated separately. The first essay will be worth 10%, the revision assignment 25%, and the second essay 15%: totaling 50% of your final grade.

### **Final Essay (30%)**

This paper is an opportunity for you to exercise your skills in the explanation of specific philosophical ideas and arguments, and to develop an original philosophical interpretation. This final assignment will therefore allow you to exercise the skills honed in your Explications Essays while going further to develop original philosophical interpretations, problems, and assessments of the material. A substantial portion of the paper should be devoted to explicating these ideas and

arguments in your own words. The second portion of the paper should be devoted to analyzing and critically assessing the ideas. The final paper should be between 7-10 pages double-spaced.

### Course Policies

- Assignments. All assignments must be submitted as hardcopies in class by the due date specified on the schedule below. Late assignments will only be accepted on compassionate grounds with approval from the instructor *prior to* the due date.
- Conduct. All students are expected to engage respectfully with their colleagues in philosophical discussion. Any student disrupting the attention, work, and personal safety of the class will be asked to leave.
- Electronic Devices. Computers are permitted only for note-taking purposes and should not be used to the distraction of the class. *Cellphones are strictly not permitted* during class. Please excuse yourself from the room in the case of an emergency.
- Assistance. If you require any special assistance as a student, I will make my best effort to help you in any way I can to succeed and find the classroom to be an accessible and rewarding space. Please contact me with any information that would assist me in this.

### Reading Schedule

Reading schedule is subject to modification by instructor based on the needs, interests, and course of discussion in the class. Check online resource regularly for updated reading schedule. It is necessary to complete the assigned reading *prior to* the class for which it is assigned. “Focus” sections designate important portions of larger readings to which you should devote extra attention.

<b><u>Week</u></b>		<b><u>Assigned Reading</u></b>	<b><u>Assignments</u></b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Tues. Jan. 8</b>	Introduction to Course: The Question of the Body Introduction to <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> (Handout*)	
	<b>Thur. Jan. 10</b>	Maurice Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> ” “Part One: The Body,” Introduction & § 1	
<b>2</b>	<b>Tues. Jan. 15</b>	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> : “Part One: The Body,” §§ 4 & 5	
	<b>Thur. Jan. 17</b>		
<b>3</b>	<b>Tues. Jan. 22</b>	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , “Part Two: The Perceived World,” §§ 1 & 4	<b>Explication 1 Due</b>
	<b>Thur. Jan. 24</b>		

4	Tues. Jan. 29	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> : “Part Three: Being-For-Itself and Being-In-The-World,” §§2&3	
	Thur. Jan. 31		
5	Tues. Feb. 5	Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, <i>A Thousand Plateaus</i> : “Introduction: Rhizome” (pp. 3-25)	Explication Revision Due
	Thur. Feb. 7		
6	Tues. Feb. 12	Deleuze & Guattari, <i>Thousand Plateaus</i> , “How to Make Yourself a Body Without Organs?”	
	Thur. Feb. 14		
Feb. 18 – Feb. 22: Winter Break – No Classes			
7	Tues. Feb. 26	Deleuze & Guattari, <i>Thousand Plateaus</i> , “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...” (pp. 233- 272)	
	Thur. Feb. 28		
8	Tues. Mar. 5	Deleuze & Guattari, <i>Thousand Plateaus</i> , “Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible...” (pp. 272- 309)	Explication 2 Due
	Thur. Mar. 7		
9	Tues. Mar. 12	Michel Foucault, <i>Discipline and Punish</i> : selections on “disciplinary power” and the body *	CQ 1 Due
	Thur. Mar. 14		
10	Tues. Mar. 19	Silvia Federici, <i>Caliban and the Witch: Women, The Body, and Primitive Accumulation</i> , “The Great Caliban: The Struggle Against the Rebel Body” *	CQ 2 Due
	Thur. Mar. 21		
11	Tues. Mar. 26	Frantz Fanon, <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i> , “The Lived Experience of the Black Man” *	CQ 3 Due
	Thur. Mar. 28		

12	Tues. Apr. 2	Hélène Cixous, “The Laugh of Medusa” *	CQ 4 Due
	Thur. Apr. 4		
Tues. Apr. 9		Final Course Discussion Final Essay Assignment Available	
Apr. 27		Final Essay Due	