

Sample Syllabus (300-level)

Phenomenology: Decolonial and Classical

Prof. Carmen De Schryver

Course Description

This course familiarizes students with classical phenomenology from the perspective of its uptake and transformation in decolonial thought. Through a series of close readings of phenomenologists in both the classical and decolonial tradition, we will explore phenomenological themes such as universality, presuppositionlessness, the distinction between philosophy and worldviews, intentionality and the subject, lived experience, and embodiment. The course aims to (i) make clear key similarities and dissimilarities between decolonial and classical phenomenology; (ii) explore the dimensions of classical phenomenology that are inflected by Eurocentrism and racist exclusion; and (iii) encourage reflection upon which aspects of phenomenology are worth salvaging, and are indeed amenable to a decolonial thinking. Beyond equipping students with the tools to think critically about canon-formation and the meaning of academic decolonization, this course will familiarize students with key texts and figures in European, African and Latin American Phenomenology.

Learning Outcomes

- Discuss the general developments in phenomenology that have taken place since its initial founding
- Understand and discuss fundamental issues in decolonial phenomenological thought as well as the history and sources from which today's issues spring
- Gain a critical perspective on the Eurocentrism of classical European phenomenology
- Articulate your own position on key questions within contemporary phenomenology and its history
- Become familiar with methodological debates regarding cross-cultural comparison, and learn how to apply various methodological tools

Course Assessment

- Participation (20%)
 - (i) Preparation for class.
 - Readings. Weekly discussions will be based largely on the assigned readings. All the assigned readings for this course are mandatory. You are expected to read closely and attentively (often, this will mean reading twice; it will always mean taking notes).
 - Post on the discussion board *before class*. Depending on the week, you will be asked to either pose a question of your own based on the readings, or answer the question posted on the discussion board.
 - (ii) Contribution to the discussion.
 - A positive contribution can take on a variety of forms: asking a clarificatory question, raising a discussion point, weighing in on an interpretation, pointing to a significant passage in the text, etc. At minimum, it requires that you be a respectful and engaged listener not just to what I say but to what your peers say. Speaking up in larger group settings will be more comfortable for some than for others. If you tend to be more talkative, an important component of your contributing to a healthy and respectful discussion will be making space for others to speak. If

- you tend to be less talkative, I encourage you to meet with me during office hours to determine how we can cultivate a welcoming dialogical environment that works for you.
- (iii) Peer engagement. How you engage with your peers is a central component of the course. You will be expected to contribute to a healthy and respectful dialogical space, which is especially important given the sensitivity of the issues we will be discussing. We will spend more time talking together about peer critique, but the starting point here is that critical comments should be constructive, appropriate and aimed at the content of the argument and *never* at the person making the argument.
 - In-class presentation (10%)
 - For our first meeting, you should come prepared to select a week in which you would like to present.
 - The presentation should be about **10 minutes** and set up the discussion by highlighting the key themes and arguments in that week's readings, as well as raising **two discussion questions**. (These questions should be formulated so as to conduce to in-depth philosophical discussion. If you are unsure whether your questions are suitable, don't hesitate to contact me.)
 - Reflection papers (10%)
 - **Six** submissions of a short (one paragraph) reflection on that week's reading *in advance* of the class meeting. You may be asked to share some of this material during our discussion.
 - This can consist in a reconstruction of the views expressed in the readings, a comparison between that week's readings and some of the material encountered previously in the course, a personal reflection on the readings, a development of your own position vis-à-vis the arguments made in the readings... and so on. The key requirement is that you engage substantively with the readings.
 - Two term paper of no more than 15 pages (20% total). Prompts will be circulated in advance of the deadline.
 - Final paper of no more than 20 pages (40% total)
 - This can build on one of your reflection papers or pick a new topic.
 - 1-2 weeks prior to the deadline, you'll be assigned a partner. Each of you will comment on one another's paper outlines (10%)
 - Your assessment on the final paper will factor in peer engagement (10%) Guidelines for respectful and constructive peer feedback will be circulated online.

Note on Office Hours

I encourage you to come to office hours regularly. I particularly encourage you to come to my office hours with any questions, ideas, or worries that were raised for you during the lecture; any difficulties that you are experiencing with the material or your own learning process; or additional help and guidance you might need for assignments.

Course Materials

All of the readings will be made available in PDF.

Note on the Readings

In order to get the most out of the course, it is necessary that you read the assigned texts closely *in advance* of the class meeting. Do not be discouraged if you find the readings difficult or even confusing. Our class discussion is designed to (i) collaboratively make sense of the text and (ii) equip you with the skills that you need to fully comprehend and critically interrogate the course material. I will not expect you to understand everything that you read. I do, however, expect you to make a good-faith effort to interpret the text on your

own, and to participate in the class discussion on this basis. I would also like to emphasize that raising clarificatory questions is not just okay but very much encouraged; if you are confused about something, it is likely your peers will be as well, and your questions will be welcomed!

Course Schedule

N.B. The following is a tentative schedule for the semester. Changes to the schedule will be announced in class.

Week 1: Discussion of the Syllabus & Pedagogy

Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, pp. 71-86

Week 2: Defining Decolonization

Boulbina, "Decolonization" in *Political Concepts: A Critical Lexicon*

Kisukidi, "Decolonizing, or, Philosophy as an Object of Anthropology", pp.1-15.

Week 3: Phenomenology

Moran, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, pp.1-21

Guenther, "Critical Phenomenology", pp.7-20.

Week 4: Decolonizing Phenomenology

Guenther, "Critical Phenomenology", pp. 7-20

Mignolo, "Decoloniality and Phenomenology?", pp.360-387.

De Schryver, "Centering the Margins", pp. 1-15

Weeks 5-7: Hountondji/Husserl Pairing

Week 5: Paulin Hountondji's I: Phenomenological Approach to African Philosophy

Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, pp.55-68.

Week 6: Hountondji II

Hountondji, "Husserl for Africa?: Philosophy and Worldviews", pp.1-12.

Hountondji, "Constructing the Universal: A Transcultural Task", pp.1-17.

Week 7: Edmund Husserl I: Phenomenology: Philosophy and Worldviews

Husserl, *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, pp.122-147.

Week 8: Edmund Husserl I: Phenomenology: Philosophy and Worldviews

Husserl, *Philosophy as Rigorous Science*, pp.122-147.

Paulin Hountondji's I: Phenomenological Approach to African Philosophy

Hountondji, *African Philosophy: Myth and Reality*, pp.55-68.

Weeks 9-12: Latina Feminism/Heidegger Pairing

Week 9: Decolonial Feminisms

Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera*, pp. 10-18; 34-68

Lugones, "Playfulness, World-Travelling and Loving Perception", pp. 3-19

Week 10: Ortega on the Phenomenological Resonances of Latina Feminism
Ortega, "New Mestizas', 'World-Travellers' and 'Dasein'", pp.1-29

Week 11: Heidegger I: The Existential Analytic
Heidegger, *Being and Time*, pp.67-90.

Week 12: Heidegger II: Eurocentrism
Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp.8-41.

Weeks 13-16: Fanon/Merleau-Ponty Pairing

Week 13: Fanon: The Lived Experience of the Black Man
Fanon, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man (*BSWM*)", pp.109-120

Week 14: Fanon: The Lived Experience of the Black Man II
Fanon, "The Lived Experience of the Black Man (*BSWM*)", pp.120-140

Week 15: Merleau-Ponty I
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. lxix-lxxxv
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp.69-74; 92-99

Week 16: Merleau-Ponty II
Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp.458-483.