

PHIL5090 / 7090
Seminar on Western Philosophy: Phenomenology of Origins and Institutions

Course Outline

Time : Tue 10:30-13:15

Location : LSK 203

Course overview (as shown on CUSIS)

This course will explore how origins and institutions of meaning have been addressed in phenomenology and post-phenomenology, starting with Husserl, moving on to Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and ending with Derrida, Castoriadis and Ricoeur. We will pay close attention to the intertwining of three concepts in Husserl's late works: institution, sedimentation and reactivation. We will then explore how the question of the origin of the work of art has been addressed by Heidegger. Afterwards, we will examine how Merleau-Ponty further developed the Husserlian concept of institution in his lectures at College de France from 1954-44. We will then see how Derrida reinterpreted such phenomenological concepts as institution and reactivation in his Introduction to Husserl's "Origins of Geometry." After familiarizing ourselves with Castoriadis' work on institution and radical imagination, the course will conclude with the analysis of Ricoeur's reflections on the foundation of moral philosophy and its link to institutions.

Learning outcomes (as shown on CUSIS)

1. Demonstrate familiarity with the primary and secondary source texts on the syllabus.
2. Gain competence in explaining and evaluating the key concepts and theories addressed in the course.
3. Be able to articulate and defend a philosophical thesis concerning the issues discussed in the course.
4. Improve your skills of presenting philosophical arguments in written and oral form.

Topics

1. Institution and historicity (Husserl)
2. Origins of art and truth (Heidegger)
3. Institution in personal life and public history (Merleau-Ponty)
4. Absolute presence, origins of meaning and deconstruction (Derrida)
5. The imaginary institution of reality (Castoriadis)
6. Moral philosophy and institutions (Ricoeur)

Learning activities

In this course, you are expected to

- read and think about the assigned readings;
- develop the skills mentioned in the course outcomes through philosophical discussion and writing (reflective summaries and essays);
- attend seminars and participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lectures will be conducted in a seminar fashion: 3 academic hours each week.
2. Reading: approximately 3 hours on the basic and suggested readings each week.

Writing assignments: an average of 1 hour each week on preparing and writing essay assignments throughout the term. You should design a schedule that allows you to apportion sufficient time for writing.

Assessment scheme

Task nature	Description	Weight
Term paper	5000-7000 words	50%
Seminar presentations	Presentation	40%
Participation in Discussions	Discussion	10%

Remarks on Assessment:

1. Participation in Lectures/Seminars: Grading is based on meaningful participation in discussions. Absence will damage your grades.
2. Seminar presentations: our weekly meetings will be based on student presentations that will need to be based on reading materials. The task of the presentation is to cover the most important points in the readings. You can consider these presentations as conference presentations, whose task is to generate discussion.
3. The term paper: you may choose to write on any philosophical problem addressed in this course. You will be asked to submit a preliminary statement on a chosen topic. You will be expected to do some independent research, to formulate a central thesis as well as to develop arguments in support of it. The due date of this assignment will be announced in class towards the end of the semester.

Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Recommended learning resources

1. Husserl, E. 1970. *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology: An Introduction to Phenomenological Philosophy*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.
2. Heidegger, M. 2002. *Off the Beaten Track*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
3. Merleau-Ponty, M. 2010. *Institution and Passivity: Course Notes from the College de France (1954-44)*. Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press.
4. Derrida, J. 1989. *Edmund Husserl's "Origin of Geometry." An Introduction*. University of Nebraska Press.
5. Castoriadis, C. 1997. *The Castoriadis Reader*. MA: Blackwell Publisher.
6. Castoriadis, C. 1999. *Figures of the Thinkable*. Stanford University Press.

Course schedule

Week	Topics	Required reading
1.	Introduction	Husserl, <i>Crisis</i> (extracts)
2.	Husserl: institution, sedimentation, reactivation	Husserl, "The Origin of Geometry" (353-379)
3.	Heidegger: thing, work, truth	Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 1-33
4.	Heidegger: art and truth	Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 33-56
5.	Merleau-Ponty: institution in personal history	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Institution and Passivity</i> : 5-40
6.	Merleau-Ponty: institution in public history	Merleau-Ponty, <i>Institution and Passivity</i> : 41-80
7.	Derrida: sense investigation and the reductions	Derrida, Introduction to Husserl's "Origins of Geometry," 23-51

8.	Derrida: historicity and ideality	Derrida, Introduction to Husserl's "Origins of Geometry," 51-87
9.	Derrida: writing, imaginary variations and the lifeworld	Derrida, Introduction to Husserl's "Origins of Geometry," 87-117
10.	Derrida: suspension of ideality and the historicity of the Idea	Derrida, Introduction to Husserl's "Origins of Geometry," 117-153
11.	Castoriadis: The social Imaginary, primal Institution and Second-Order Institution	Castoriadis, <i>The Castoriadis Reader</i> , 196-218 and <i>Figures of the Thinkable</i> , 91-105
12.	Ricoeur: The foundation of moral philosophy and institutions	Ricoeur, "The Foundation of Moral Philosophy," 175-192
13.	TBD	

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Teacher	
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Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academic_honesty/

With each assignment, students will be required to submit a signed **declaration** that they are aware of these policies, regulations, guidelines and procedures. For group projects, all students of the same group should be asked to sign the declaration.

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.

Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) Tools in Teaching, Learning and Assessment

Use of generative AI tools

All use of AI tools is prohibited in assignments and assessment