Phenomenology
Jan. 18 – Apr. 16, 2021

Professor: Simone Mahrenholz
Email: simone.mahrenholz@umanitoba.ca
Online-Class-Times: Tue/Thu 2:30 pm - 3:45 pm
Classroom: Remote teaching; zoom-link will be posted on UMLearn or per email, 5-10 min. before class
Office Hours: Mo, 4:00 – 5:30 pm, or upon request, drop-in on https://zoom.us/j/3479829156?pwd=a0ZhYzdoU0h1cEJoTS9XRm0wSDFFUT09
Phone: 204-474-7888 (office) or 204-688-2500 (mobile)

Course Content

The philosophical discipline of phenomenology, founded by Edmund Husserl (1859-1938), under the direct influence of his teacher Franz von Brentano, is a fascinating, influential and turbulent philosophical movement. The first half Century of its development, under the influence of Husserl’s successor Martin Heidegger and the international entanglement between political and philosophical conflicts, contributed to the current analytic-continental-divide within philosophy. Brentano as well as Husserl started their endeavor by emphasizing philosophy as being a “rigorous” and “exact” discipline, after the model of mathematics and logic. Their work was as a form of damage control, after the shock of both, Descartes’ skeptically motivated cogoito and the "critical turn" of Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. Both had helped to shift the locus for truth and reality-encounters from the world into the subject. How can we aim at objective science and at a kind of unmediated access to the “given-ness” of the world, without falling back behinds Kant’s idealism? This was one of the challenges that Brentano and Husserl tackled with determination: originally by focusing on the interaction between psychology and logic.

In this course we will study key authors, such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, if time permits also more. While discussing the development with historical texts, we will also examine the movement from a contemporary systematic perspective.

Course Organization

The thorough reading of about 30-50 pages of primary text per week is required. Material is mostly from the textbooks (below), additional material and voluntary background readings will be provided electronically. The course is discussion intensive: you are expected to attend every class (a participation list will be held) and to regularly participate
in the debate, asking questions, exchanging interpretations. Further, you are supposed to post a brief comment on the readings once a week in the discussion-forum on UMLearn. Participation in discussions and these blog-entries will be evaluated primarily on the basis of continuity and intellectual and personal engagement. The course aims at providing a protected space of mutual trust, encouraging an open exchange of ideas. There is no need to try to avoid ‘mistakes’ or errors at all cost: misunderstandings often bear the potential for central insight and growth for the whole group.

Summing up: you are expected to:
- read about 30-50 pages a week and prepare for discussion
- attend each class, having the assigned text and your notes ready at hand
- have your camera on during zoom-sessions (send me a note in advance for sessions in which that is not possible)
- post weekly brief comments or questions regarding the readings on the course-blog on UMLearn under: communication – discussion - forum and the current topic.
- check your Umanitoba-email-account frequently for updates and additional information
- download the latest assignments bi-weekly from the course-webpage on UMLearn

Course Objectives

At the end of the course the students are expected to
- be familiar with a selection of key authors, topics, concepts, problems, and arguments of phenomenology,
- the technique of close reading, analyzing the meaning of texts and of construction and re-constrcuting philosophical positions and arguments in speaking and writing,
- contextualizing the text and its arguments within the bigger debate
- Further, students interact attentively and in a supportive way with classmates during discussions, both online and in the discussion forum.
- And they expected to reflect on their own existence and thoughts on the basis of phenomenological discourse and to give their reflections a voice.

Required Texts
(available at the U of M bookstore)


Additional texts will made available on UMLearn or will be available on-line.
Program

The program as well as the readings assigned for each upcoming session will be announced in class and in the assignment sheets uploaded regularly on UMLearn. If you have questions, don’t hesitate to ask me via email or during office hours.

Evaluation / Grading

Regular attendance in online-class-sessions, incl. possible pop up quizzes 12 %
Oral participation in class-discussions 13 %
Weekly short comments on the discussion forum on UMLearn 15 %
under: communication – discussion – forum - latest topic.
        1/2 page, could be less or more: a brief comment, idea, or a simple reading- or discussion-question; length is of minor importance. You are supposed to post 11 comments (one per week minus 1) and 5 or more constructive, brief responses to others. Both can happen in the same week. Feel free to post and comment more, should you get into it.
Midterm Test, due Tue, March 9th, with 3 days writing time, about 4 p.) 25 %
Final Essay (6-8 pages) due Tue April 6th at midnight 35 %
No final exam!

Grading Scale
In this course (though not necessarily in any other course in the Department of Philosophy) the following equivalence between letter grades and percentages is used:

Letter Grade | Grade Point Value
---|---
A+ | 93-100 | Exceptional
A | 86-92 | Excellent
B+ | 79-85 | Very Good
B | 72-78 | Good
C+ | 64-71 | Satisfactory
C | 56-63 | Adequate
D | 51-55 | Marginal
F | 0-50 | Failure

WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE

The last date for voluntary withdrawal is Wednesday, March 31, 2021.
ATTENDANCE AND CLASS ETIQUETTE

Attending class regularly is required. Attendance is taken at the beginning of class or at its end. You are expected to show up on time and stay until the end, or you will be counted as absent. If an emergency prevents you from attending the whole class, send me an email, if possible in advance. After four absences from class, every subsequent absence will deduct 1/3 letter grade from your grade for attendance (e.g. from B+ to a B). This rule applies to all absences, including absences due to illness, and extracurricular activity,

Your camera is expected to be on for the 75 minutes of class. If you do not want the class to visually access your private habitat, feel free to pick a virtual background via zoom. Should you not be able to activate your camera for a particular session, send me an email before class, explaining the circumstances.

While on Zoom, mute your microphone and un-mute it when you speak. Electronic devices such as phones should be kept away during class-time.

EMAIL-ETIQUETTE

Address me directly by name and sign with your full name. Otherwise I will not respond. In the subject line, include the course title.

MISSED DEADLINES FOR COURSEWORK

If you are unable to meet a given deadline due to medical circumstances, please inform me as soon as possible by email from your U of M email address, including your full name and course title.

A NOTE ON RECORDING CLASSES

Recording classes is prohibited.

A NOTE ON SHARING COURSE MATERIALS

Sharing of course materials provided by myself as well as assignments and exam questions is prohibited, unless otherwise stated. This implies that you are not allowed to upload any class material on a note sharing or tutoring website without explicit permission.
PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Formal written assignments such as take-home tests or essays must include the following statement on the title page:

“In accordance with the Honor Code, I affirm that this work is my own and all content taken from other sources has been properly acknowledged.”

For general information, please check out this webpage: [http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/academic-supports/academic-integrity](http://umanitoba.ca/student-supports/academic-supports/academic-integrity)

Plagiarism or cheating will result in an F for the assignment and may result in an F for the course, further they may carry additional penalties as per university policy. Students should acquaint themselves with the University’s policy on plagiarism, cheating, exam personation (hiring others to write your class-papers or tests), academic fraud, inappropriate collaboration, and duplicate submission (see link above). All of these are in violation of the Student Discipline Bylaw and will lead to serious disciplinary action. Visit the above website for more information and support. – If you are ever uncertain about academic honesty of anything you are doing for the course, please do not hesitate to ask me. More information is here: [http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/index.html](http://www.umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/student/index.html).

Plagiarism occurs when someone uses an article, book, or website in his/her work without citing the source in a footnote (instead of footnotes, you can reference author, year of publication and page-number in brackets, followed by a bibliography at the end of your paper). Plagiarism is a form of cheating because the plagiarist takes the writing of another and treats it as his/her own. The work of another is stolen. Plagiarism is a serious offense. To avoid being prosecuted for plagiarism you should be sure that you include a footnote whenever you rely on someone else’s work. If you are quoting (using someone else's words) you must indicate that the prose is a quotation either by the use of quotation marks, or (for long quotations) by offsetting the quotation from the rest of your text. Each quotation must be followed by a footnote. If you are paraphrasing (i.e., summarizing someone else’s text in your own words) the paraphrase must be followed by a footnote. (or info in brackets see above). If you do not know how to construct footnotes or other forms of referencing/quoting, you should ask your professor for instructions before you turn in any assignments. There are different forms of acceptable citation. Your professor will indicate which method he/she prefers. Be sure to cite the source on which you relied accurately. If you use a website, you must include the correct URL.

If you are suspected of plagiarism, a disciplinary hearing will be conducted by the Philosophy Department. If it is determined that you plagiarized, you will get an F for the assignment, and (in most cases) an F for the course. A note may also be included on your transcript to indicate that the F resulted from plagiarism. If you are suspected a second time, a hearing will be conducted by the Dean's Office and you may be suspended from University. Additionally, some forms of plagiarism constitute criminal acts under Canadian law. Here are some common excuses for plagiarism, which will not reduce your penalty:

1. I forgot to cite the source.
2. I was in a rush and left out the footnotes.
3. I did not understand how to construct footnotes.

If you are rushed for time, make sure above all else that you don’t plagiarize. A grade of C
on a rough but un plagiarized paper is better for you than an F on the course. If you have any questions about when citation is required or about how to cite, be sure to ask me. Bottom line: Accidental plagiarism is plagiarism. Plagiarism is considered a very serious breach within the intellectual community and punishment is accordingly severe. It is your responsibility to know what is and is not an instance of plagiarism. If ever you are in doubt, talk to me.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

The Academic Learning Centre is located in 201 Tier Building (http://umanitoba.ca/student/academiclearning/index.html, phone: 204-480-1481). Advisors provide a wide range of services focused on improvement of academic learning skills. You can get individual consultations with a learning specialist (e.g. on test-taking, time management, or learning strategies). They have writing tutors to work with you on writing assignments. The Centre also offers workshops on test taking, note-taking, essay and term paper writing, and listening skills. These services are free to U of M students, some are available online. Further: Student Accessibility Services (http://umanitoba.ca/student/saa/accessibility/) can arrange for you to receive accommodation or access to resources/services you may need.

IN AN EMERGENCY

If you encounter unforeseen personal problems of any kind that might have a negative impact on your well-being and academic performance, do not hesitate to contact me for a confidential conversation, either during my online-office hours or by making an extra appointment with me. Further: listed here are a few helpful resources:

http://umanitoba.ca/student/mentalhealth/

Whatever you try, if one resource is not helpful, don’t hesitate to try another one.