

PHIL 4/51055: Phenomenology

Classic Texts and Contemporary Applications

Spring 2025 · MW 2:15-3:30 · 315 Bowman Hall

Professor: Dr. Gina Zavota

Office: 320 Bowman Hall, Room G

Office Hours: MW 1:00-2:15 & 3:45-4:15 (in person)
T 4:00-5:00 (Teams); and by appointment

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The times listed above are the hours I'll definitely be available to meet with you. You don't need to make an appointment to meet with me at those times; just come to the office or join the Teams meeting. If those times aren't good for you, I'd be happy to schedule a different time to meet. I look forward to seeing you during office hours, whether in person or remotely!

Course Description and Learning Outcomes

This course will provide an in-depth study of the phenomenological movement in 20th- and 21st-century philosophy, from its origin in the thought of Edmund Husserl and his contemporaries, through such canonical thinkers as Martin Heidegger and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, to various contemporary developments. Substantial time will be devoted to considering applications of phenomenology to various disciplines and issues in, for example, the humanities, sciences, and arts, chosen based on student interest. This is in keeping with the overall focus in this seminar on phenomenology not only as a philosophical school, but also as a methodology with broad and diverse applications.

Learning Outcomes: This course has several distinct but related learning outcomes. In particular, **after successfully completing this course, you should be able to:**

- know the general course of the development of the phenomenological movement over the last century
- understand and discuss the principal arguments contained in several important texts in classic and contemporary phenomenology
- explain how phenomenological ideas and methods are being used today in a variety of disciplines
- understand the interconnections between phenomenology and work being done in other philosophical traditions, as well as other disciplines
- argue for your own position on some central questions addressed in contemporary phenomenology, both orally and in writing

Prerequisites: PHIL 41055 - Junior standing or one course from PHIL 31001-31020.

PHIL 51055 - Graduate standing.

Students who do not have the proper prerequisites risk being deregistered from the course.

Required Texts and Assignments

Required Text: *The Phenomenology Reader*, ed. Dermot Moran and Timothy Mooney (Routledge, 2002)

In addition to this anthology, other works will be made available to you at no cost on Canvas. These additional readings are also required.

For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the assigned pages and to arrive prepared to discuss them. **Please bring the relevant text(s) to each class meeting.** Classes will consist of lectures, discussions, careful study of the texts, and presentations by graduate students. Make sure to write down any questions you have about the readings and ask them in class or during office hours. After we've discussed a given text in class, you should read it again to see whether your questions have been answered; if not, come to office hours so that we can work through any difficulties you might still be having with the text.

Assignments: All assignments, feedback, and grades will be made available in Canvas. A running total of your weighted average in the course will also be available in the "Grades" tab in Canvas throughout the semester. Grades will generally be posted approximately a week after the due date for the assignment.

Your final grade will be determined based on your performance on the following items.

Undergraduates (PHIL 41055)

- 1) **Short Writing Assignments:** During the course of the semester, you will be required to complete short (650-750 words) writing assignments on assigned topics. These papers are meant to assess not only your understanding of the main arguments presented in the texts we will read, but also your ability to see the implications of, and respond critically to, these arguments. Think of these assignments more as take-home, open-book essay exams, as opposed to short research papers. *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **60% of final grade**
- 2) **Reading Summaries:** You will be required to submit a brief (350-450 words) summary of one of the week's readings most weeks of the semester. Each summary will be due *before* we discuss the relevant reading in class. **Your two lowest summary grades will be dropped.** *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **20% of final grade**
- 3) **Class Participation:** For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the designated selections and arrive prepared to discuss them. I would suggest that you take notes while reading, especially if you have questions you would like to ask in class. While attendance and punctuality will be taken into account in the calculation of your participation grade, this grade will primarily reflect the extent to which you make meaningful contributions to class discussions (this includes asking questions about material that you don't understand). *See Syllabus Attachment #2 for further details.* – **20% of final grade**

Graduates (PHIL 51055)

- 1) **Reading Summaries:** You will be required to submit a brief (350-450 words) summary of one of the week's readings most weeks of the semester. Each summary will be due *before* we discuss the relevant reading in class. **Your two lowest summary grades will be dropped.** *See Syllabus Attachment #1 for further details.* – **30% of final grade**
- 2) **Class Participation:** For each class meeting, you will be expected to read the designated selections and arrive prepared to discuss them. I would suggest that you take notes while reading, especially if you have questions you would like to ask in class. While attendance and punctuality will be taken into account in the calculation of your participation grade, this grade will primarily reflect the extent to which you make meaningful contributions to class discussions (this includes asking questions about material that you don't understand). *See Syllabus Attachment #2 for further details.* – **20% of final grade**
- 3) **Seminar Paper:** Your main writing assignment will be a paper of approximately 3500 words in length in which you will state and defend an original thesis of your choosing relating to one or more of the texts we will read (and possibly other texts as well), using several secondary sources. You will also complete three

preliminary assignments during the semester, which will help you develop your final essay. See *Syllabus Attachment #3* for further details. – **40% of final grade**

- 4) **Presentation:** At the end of the semester, each graduate student will give a 25-minute presentation. During this time, you will explain the content of your seminar paper and lead a discussion on questions arising from your topic. See *Syllabus Attachment #4* for further details. – **10% of final grade**

Online Assignment Details: As mentioned above, **all writing assignments will be handled via Canvas.** Each writing assignment will be made available at least a week before the due date. **All assignments other than Reading Summaries will be due at 11:59pm Eastern US time on the due date. Reading Summaries will be due at 2:15pm Eastern US time on the due date** (i.e. before the start of class).

- You will have two chances to upload a file, but this is only in case you upload the wrong file or forget to attach a file the first time. If you upload two versions of the assignment, only the second one will be read and used to calculate your grade.
- **Late papers will be accepted but will be marked as late and penalized as described below. Late summaries will not be accepted.**

Grading and Attendance Practices

Your final numerical grade will be calculated using the percentages given above. It will then be translated into a letter grade using the table below.

Total Points	Final Grade
93-100	A
90-92.99	A-
87-89.99	B+
83-86.99	B
and so on...	
67-69.99	D+
60-66.99	D
<60	F

Late or Missed Assignments: If you think that you will not be able to complete an assignment on time, you will be allowed to turn the assignment in late with no penalty **only if** (1) you have an acceptable reason for the delay (see below), **and** (2) you provide documentation of whatever caused you to miss the assignment. **Assignments (except summaries) which are simply submitted late will be penalized 10% of their total possible points for each 48-hour period (or part of such period) that they are late**, e.g. a paper that is submitted 72 hours late will be penalized 20%. **Summaries submitted late will receive a grade of zero.**

Attendance Policy: Regular attendance is vital to success in this course. As a result, unexcused absences will result in points being deducted from your overall course grade according to the following schedule:

- **0-3 unexcused absences:** no effect on final grade
- **4-6 unexcused absences:** final grade reduced by a full letter (e.g. from a B+ to a C+)
- **7-9 unexcused absences:** final grade reduced by two full letters (e.g. from a B+ to a D+)
- **10 or more unexcused absences:** automatic grade of F

Acceptable reasons for an excused absence or late assignment include illness or a medical emergency, a field trip for another class, a one-time work conflict (a work schedule that conflicts with class on a regular basis is *not* acceptable), or a family emergency. Documentation is required for an absence to be excused, either prior to the absence or as soon as possible after your return to class. Situations where documentation is impossible will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If you are part of a KSU sports team that competes out of town, you must provide documentation of your travel schedule at the beginning of the semester.

Technology Requirements

Internet Access: All assignments for this course will be completed on Canvas. As a result, it is extremely important that you ensure that you have regular access to a laptop or desktop computer with consistent, reliable internet access, as well as a backup plan if your Wi-Fi goes out or your computer breaks. **Computer malfunction or lack of internet access will not be accepted as an excuse for not completing an assignment on time.**

Canvas: This is the official platform for this class, so you should familiarize yourself with it before the start of the semester. In order to login to Canvas, you will need a Kent State FlashLine User ID and password. You can access Canvas at <https://canvas.kent.edu> or through FlashLine. Canvas works best using the latest version of Chrome, Safari, or Firefox. Do not use Internet Explorer. **Students have reported issues with the Canvas mobile app, so it is recommended that you complete the assignments for this course in a web browser.**

Email: A university-assigned student e-mail account is the official university means of communication with all students at Kent State University. Students are responsible for all information sent to them via their university-assigned e-mail account. If you choose to forward information in your university e-mail account, you are still responsible for all information, including attachments, sent to any other e-mail account. To stay current with university information, you should check your official university e-mail account on a frequent and consistent basis.

I will communicate with the class through the Announcements function in Canvas, so make sure that your Canvas account is configured to notify you whenever there is a new announcement in this course.

I will check my email at least once per day Monday through Friday, and at least once during the weekend. **I will generally respond to all emails within 24 hours during the week, and within 48 hours on the weekend.** If there are special circumstances that will delay responses, I will make an announcement to the class.

Technology Help: Kent State University offers 24/7 technology support to all students. For technical issues with your computer, any KSU-supported software, Canvas, FlashLine, or your kent.edu email, please contact Information Services via phone, email, or Live Chat. More information, including contact information, is available on the [Information Services](#) web page. Students can access tech help day or night by calling 330-672-HELP. **Please contact the Helpdesk for technical assistance; I will not be able to assist you with technical issues.**

University Policies, Procedures, and Resources

Students with Disabilities: University policy 3-01.3 in the *University Policy Register* requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note that you must first verify your eligibility through Student Accessibility Services (contact (330) 672-3391 or visit <http://www.kent.edu/sas> for more information on registration procedures).

Academic Dishonesty: University policy 3-01.8 in the *University Policy Register* deals with the problem of academic dishonesty, cheating, and plagiarism. None of these will be tolerated in this class. The sanctions provided in this policy will be used to deal with any violations. It is recommended that students familiarize themselves with this policy at <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-regarding-student-cheating-and-plagiarism>. Note that, per this policy, **any use of generative AI (GAI) in a class is considered cheating, unless explicitly allowed by the instructor.** If you have any questions, please feel free to ask.

Academic Complaint Procedure: The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University

Policy 4-02.3 in the *University Policy Register*, which can be found at <http://www.kent.edu/policyreg/administrative-policy-and-procedure-student-academic-complaints>.

For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the departmental chairperson.

Add/Drop and Withdrawal Deadlines: The official registration deadline for this course is **January 19, 2025**. The last day to drop the course without a “W” appearing on your record is **January 26, 2025**. The withdrawal deadline for this course is **March 30, 2025**. University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Students must confirm enrollment by checking their class schedule in FlashLine prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

Intellectual Property: Any intellectual property displayed or distributed to students during this course (including but not limited to PowerPoint presentations, notes, quizzes, examinations) by the professor/lecturer/instructor remains the intellectual property of the professor/lecturer/instructor. This means that the student may not distribute, publish, or provide such intellectual property to any other person or entity for any reason, commercial or otherwise, without the express written permission of the professor/lecturer/instructor. Additionally, students may not distribute or publish recordings and/or links to live classroom presentations, lectures, and/or class discussions. **Please respect the intellectual property of your instructor by not posting class materials online.**

Mental Well-Being Support: Mental health challenges may also make it difficult for students to reach their full potential. KSU’s mental health and wellness resource page provides information on education and awareness, mental health services, and advocacy intervention. To learn more, please visit Kent State’s mental health resources and support website at <https://www.kent.edu/mentalhealth>.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Kent State University is committed to the creation and maintenance of equitable and inclusive learning spaces. This course is a learning environment where all will be treated with respect and dignity, and where all individuals will have an equitable opportunity to succeed. The diversity that each student brings to this course is viewed as a strength and a benefit. Dimensions of diversity and their intersections include but are not limited to: race, ethnicity, national origin, primary language, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, mental and physical abilities, socio-economic status, first-generation student status, family/caregiver status, and veteran status.

Land Acknowledgment Statement: We acknowledge that the lands of Kent State University were the previous homes of people who were removed from this area without their consent by the colonial practices of the United States government. Before removal, these groups created networks that extended from Wyoming to the Florida Coast and Appalachia and to the northern reaches of Lake Superior. These societies included people of the Shawnee, Seneca-Cayuga, Delaware, Wyandots, Ottawa and Miami. We honor their lives – both past and present – and strive to move beyond remembrance toward reflection and responsibility through honest accounts of the past and the development of cultural knowledge and community.

Accommodations for Religious and Spiritual Beliefs: In accordance with House Bill 353, KSU permits students to request class absences, without penalty, for up to three days per term in order to participate in organized activities conducted by a religious or spiritual organization. The request must be made to your instructor, in writing, during the first fourteen (14) days of the semester and must include the date(s) of each proposed absence. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities and must describe the particular accommodation(s) you desire. For further information, please contact the Student Ombuds at ombuds@kent.edu.

This syllabus and reading & assignment schedule may be subject to change; any changes will be communicated via the Announcements function in Canvas.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

Writing Assignments (WAs) will always be due at 11:59pm US Eastern Time on Wednesday.

There will also be reading summaries due by the start of class (2:15pm) on Monday (or the day we begin to discuss a new text) on Weeks 3-8 & 10-15.

All readings with page numbers listed are in the Moran & Mooney anthology. All other readings are available on Canvas in the module for the week in which they are due.

Part I: Phenomenological Foundations

Assignments

Week 1	Jan 13 Jan 15	Introduction Brentano, "The Distinction between Mental and Physical Phenomena" (p. 35-48)	
Week 2	Jan 20 Jan 22	MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY Brentano (continued)	
Week 3	Jan 27 Jan 29	Husserl, "Consciousness as Intentional Experience," §16-21 (p. 93-104) "	
Week 4	Feb 3 Feb 5	Husserl, "The Way into Phenomenological Transcendental Philosophy (p. 151-173; focus on §28, 29, 33-35) "	WA #1
Week 5	Feb 10 Feb 12	Heidegger, "The Phenomenological Method of Investigation" (p. 278-288) "	
Week 6	Feb 17 Feb 19	Heidegger, "The Worldhood of the World," §14-16 (p. 288-299) "	
Week 7	Feb 24 Feb 26	Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Object and Mechanistic Physiology" (p. 427-435) "	WA #2
Week 8	Mar 3 Mar 5	Merleau-Ponty, "Eye and Mind" (focus on sections 1-3) "	Seminar Paper Topic Due (Grad)
Week 9	Mar 10 Mar 12	SPRING BREAK SPRING BREAK	

Part II: Contemporary Applications

Topic 1

Week 10 Mar 17
 Mar 19

WA #3

Week 11 Mar 24
 Mar 26

Seminar Paper Outline Due (Grad)

Topic 2

Week 12 Mar 31
 Apr 2

Week 13 Apr 7
 Apr 9

WA #4

Topic 3

Week 14 Apr 14
 Apr 16

Seminar Paper Draft Due (Grad)

Week 15 Apr 21
 Apr 23

Week 16 Apr 28
 Apr 30

GRADUATE PRESENTATIONS

WA #5

THERE WILL BE NO FINAL EXAM IN THIS COURSE · SEMINAR PAPER – FINAL VERSION (GRADS): Due by 11:59pm on Thursday, May 8