7AAN2095
20th Century Continental Philosophy
Syllabus – Academic year 2014/15

Basic information
Credits: 30
Module Tutor: Dr Sacha Golob
Office: 705, Philosophy Building
Consultation time: TBC
Semester: Semester 2
Lecture time and venue: TBC

Module description

This module introduces some of the most influential thinkers within modern ‘continental’ philosophy. The course aims both to highlight key points of contact with analytic philosophy, and to capture and analyse some of the features that make the ‘continental’ tradition distinctive. The main texts studied will be Sartre’s Being and Nothingness, Merleau-Ponty’s Phenomenology of Perception and Foucault’s History of Sexuality and Discipline and Punish. All texts will be studied in translation.

Learning outcomes

• The capacity to acquire a firm grasp of the philosophical content of the most important developments within 20th century continental philosophy.
• An ability to ascertain the significance of works within their philosophical, historical and cultural background
• Skill in the careful analysis of language and argument as a means of exposition, as an instrument of refutation and as a dialectical process of engaging with other philosophers

Assessment methods and deadlines

• Formative assessment: 1 x 2,000–3,000-word essay, due by end of semester or as otherwise instructed.
• Summative assessment: 1 x 4,000-word essay, due TBC.
Outline of lecture topics plus suggested readings
If possible you should read this material before the lecture.

(1) Introducing Existentialism and Phenomenology: Sartre and Husserl
Sartre, ‘Existentialism is a Humanism’, Public Lecture 1945, on Keats and widely available online.*
Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations* (Nijhof, 1960 or reprint), §§3-8.*

(2) Sartre’s Metaphysics: Intentionality, Being-for-Itself, Nothingness
McCulloch, *Using Sartre* (Routledge 1994), Ch1.*

(3) Sartre on Projects and Freedom
Sartre, *Sartre: Basic Writings* (Priest ed., Routledge 2001), p.177-190. [Intro to and extracts from *Being and Nothingness]*.*

(4) Sartre on Bad Faith and The Look
Sartre, *Sartre: Basic Writings* (Priest ed., Routledge 2001), p.204-220. [Intro to and extracts from *Being and Nothingness]*.*
Webber, *The Existentialism of Sartre*, (Routledge: 2009), Ch6.*

(5) Emotions and the Imagination in Sartre
Sartre, *Sartre: Basic Writings* (Priest ed., Routledge 2001), p.89-105. [Intro to and extracts from *Being and Nothingness* and *Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions]**

(6) Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology and the Tradition

(7) Merleau-Ponty: Embodiment and Perception

(8) Merleau-Ponty on Freedom and Style
Merleau-Ponty, ‘Cezanne’s Doubt’ (1945).*
(9) Heidegger, Structuralism, and Foucault
Foucault ‘Two Lectures: Lecture II 14th Jan 1976 ’ in *Power/Knowledge* (Pantheon: 1980).*

(10) Foucault, Sexuality and Subjectivity
Suggested Essay Questions

(1) How coherent is Sartre’s account of a ‘pre-reflective self-awareness’?
   OR
   ‘[For Sartre] Human being is not the same as the rest of being but is distinguished from it by a separating nothingness…Is this nothingness a futile hypostatization?’ [Barnes]. Is it?

(2) What does Sartre mean when he says that being-for-itself ‘is what it is not’ and ‘is not what it is’? Is he right?

(3) ‘Sartre’s account of freedom leaves us unable to explain the role of character’. Discuss.

(4) Are we always in bad faith? Are we ever in bad faith?
   OR
   ‘Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others’ [Sartre]. Critically assess Sartre’s reasons for this view.

(5) ‘Cruelty is simply the energy in a man which civilization has not yet altogether corrupted: therefore it is a virtue, not a vice’ [Sade]. If Sartre’s theory of sexuality is correct, was Sade a sadist?

(6) What is ‘Objective Thought’? How compelling are Merleau-Ponty’s criticisms of it?

(7) ‘Whilst his criticisms of other philosophers are cogent, Merleau-Ponty’s own account of embodiment is hopelessly vague’. How fair is this view?

(8) What are the weakest and the strongest points of Merleau-Ponty’s work on freedom?

(9) ‘You ask: Comment redonner un sens au mot Humanisme? [How can we restore meaning to the word humanism?]. This question proceeds from your intention to retain the word humanism. I wonder whether that is necessary’ [Heidegger]. Is it necessary?

(10) What, if anything, can Foucault contribute to a philosophical understanding of either subjectivity or sexuality?
Further Reading by Lecture Topic

(1) Introducing Existentialism and Phenomenology
Cooper, ‘Existentialism as a Philosophical Movement’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (CUP: 2012).*
Smith, *Husserl and the Cartesian Meditation*, (Routledge 2003), Intro and Ch1.

(2) Sartre’s Metaphysics: Intentionality, Being-for-Itself, Nothingness
Sartre, *Sartre: Basic Writings* (Priest ed., Routledge 2001), p.76 (from ‘All consciousness’) to p.82 [*Being and Nothingness* on Intentionality].*
Crowell, ‘Sartre’s existentialism and the nature of consciousness’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (CUP: 2012).*
Barnes, ‘Sartre's ontology: The revealing and making of being’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (CUP: 1992).*

(3) Sartre on Projects and Freedom
Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Trans. Barnes, 1943 or reprint), Pt4, Ch1, Secs 1-3.

(4) Sartre on Bad Faith and The Look
Simont, ‘Sartrean Ethics’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (CUP: 1992).*

(5) Emotions and the Imagination in Sartre
Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (Trans. Barnes, 1943 or reprint), Pt3, Ch3, Secs 1-3.
Giles, ‘Sartre, Sexual Desire and Relations with Others’ in Giles (ed.) *French Existentialism: Consciousness, Ethics and Relations with Others*, (Rodopi, 1999).
(6) Merleau-Ponty: Phenomenology and the Tradition

(7) Merleau-Ponty: Embodiment and Perception

(8) Merleau-Ponty on Freedom and Style

(9) Heidegger, Structuralism and Foucault
Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (Allen Lane: 1977 or reprint), Pt 1, Secs 1-2; Pt 3, Sec 1.
Schrift, *20th Century French Philosophy* (Blackwell: 2006), Ch.4.*
Harries, ‘The Antinomy of Being: Heidegger’s Anti-Humanism’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Existentialism* (CUP: 2012).*
Howells, ‘Sartre and the Deconstruction of the Subject’ in the *Cambridge Companion to Sartre* (CUP: 1992).*

(10) Foucault, Sexuality and Subjectivity
Foucault ‘Subject and Power’ *Critical Inquiry* 1982.*