
PHI 630: MERLEAU-PONTY AND DERRIDA

BODY, LANGUAGE, AND EXPRESSION

HUGH J. SILVERMAN
SPRING 2007
MONDAYS 6:00-9:00
HARRIMAN 249
Office Hours (Harriman 203):
Wednesdays 3-5 and by appt.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-61) published *Phenomenology of Perception* in 1945 -- this groundbreaking study of perception, embodiment, and the social has marked continental philosophy ever since. We will begin the seminar with some of the final chapters of this important work, following Merleau-Ponty's theories of embodiment, language acquisition, direct / indirect language and expression through to his final writings on visibility, interrogation, and chiasm at the time of his death in 1961. Jacques Derrida's (1930-2004) earliest work focused on some of the same issues that concerned Merleau-Ponty throughout his career -- the question of the sign, expression, and the subject in Husserl's writings. Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena* (1967) was the focus of this attention. Concerns with Merleau-Pontean topics such as Cézanne's experience as a painter, the chiasmatic, and visibility resurfaced in *The Truth in Painting* (1976) and again in *Memoirs of the Blind* (1990). In *On Touching -- Jean-Luc Nancy* (2000), Derrida offered an explicit re-reading of Merleau-Ponty's notions of the sensuous through his investigations of Jean-Luc Nancy's haptics -- the language of touch and touching. This work brings us full circle back to the *Phenomenology of Perception* and *The Visible and the Invisible*. We will retrace this itinerary as a way of reanimating some key contemporary issues in continental philosophy today.

Texts will be selected from:

I. Maurice Merleau-Ponty

PHENOMENOLOGY OF PERCEPTION (Routledge) - - **first assignments: Preface, I, chs 4-6, II, ch 4, III, chs 1-3**

CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE (Northwestern)

PROSE OF THE WORLD (Northwestern)

MERLEAU-PONTY AESTHETICS READER, ed. Galen Johnson (Northwestern)

THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE (Northwestern)

TEXTS AND DIALOGUES, eds. Hugh J. Silverman and James Barry Jr.(Humanity Books)

II. Jacques Derrida

SPEECH AND PHENOMENA (Northwestern University Press)

THE TRUTH IN PAINTING (University of Chicago Press)

MEMOIRS OF THE BLIND (University of Chicago Press)

ON TOUCHING -- JEAN-LUC NANCY (Stanford University Press)

Recommended (for consultation):

III. authored or edited by Hugh J. Silverman

PHILOSOPHY AND NON-PHILOSOPHY SINCE MERLEAU-PONTY, includes Hugh J. Silverman translation of Merleau-Ponty's "Philosophy and Non-Philosophy since Hegel" (Northwestern)

DERRIDA AND DECONSTRUCTION (Routledge)

PHILOSOPHY AND DESIRE (Routledge)

INSCRIPTIONS: After Phenomenology and Structuralism (Northwestern)

TEXTUALITIES: Between Hermeneutics and Deconstruction (Routledge)

Assignments:

Seminar Papers: two papers (about 8-10 pages in length) [40% each]. The first paper should deal an aspect of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy. The second should focus on Derrida, but can also include indications of how Derrida differs from Merleau-Ponty on a topic of the seminar participant's choosing.

Quizzes: There will also be two unannounced quizzes [5% each] during the semester – based on the reading assigned for the day.

Protocols: each member of the seminar will prepare a protocol for one or two of the seminar sessions (depending on the number of seminar participants) [10%]. The person responsible for a particular week will write up an account of what transpired in class the previous week and will make a copy available to each of the members of the seminar prior to the beginning of class. The protocol for a particular week will be discussed at the outset of the seminar. This will give everyone an opportunity to review what transpired in the previous session and to raise any lingering issues or topics that were not sufficiently treated when first presented.

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[http://ws.cc.sunysb.edu/rtpl/HJS COURSES](http://ws.cc.sunysb.edu/rtpl/HJS_COURSES)

Schedule

DATE	TOPIC / READING	PROTOCOL
<u>Jan 22</u>	<u>Overview</u>	
<u>Jan 29</u>	<u>Introduction: Merleau-Ponty: Perception and Embodiment</u> <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , Preface, I: chs. 4-6 (esp ch 6: "The Body as Speech and Expression") Background reading in <i>Textualities</i> (Part I) and <i>Inscriptions</i> (chs. 1-9)	
<u>Feb. 5</u>	<u>Merleau-Ponty: Language, Expression, and the Social (1947-51)</u> <i>Texts and Dialogues</i> : "Chapsal Interview" & "Two Proposals on Perception" <i>Phenomenology of Perception</i> , II: ch. 4 – "Other Selves and the Human World" III: chs 1-3 – "The Cogito," "Temporality," "Freedom"	
<u>Feb. 12</u>	<u>Language Development and the Experience of the Other</u> "Cezanne's Doubt" (1945/48) – <i>M-P Aesthetics Reader</i> <i>Consciousness and the Acquisition of Language</i> (1949-50) "Indirect Language and the Voices of Silence" (1951-52) – <i>M-P Aesthetics Reader</i>	
<u>Feb 19</u>	<u>Merleau-Ponty: Indirect Language and Expression</u> <i>Prose of the World</i> (1952, posthumous) "The Specter of a Pure Language" "Science and the Experience of Expression" "The Indirect Language" "The Algorithm and the Mystery of Language"	

Feb 26 Merleau-Ponty and the Language of Visibility
"Eye and Mind" – *M-P Aesthetics Reader*
The Visible and the Invisible (1960-61 – posthumous)
Chs 1-3 – Interrogation and Reflection – Dialectic - Intuition

Mar 5 Merleau-Ponty and the Language of Visibility
The Visible and the Invisible, ch. 4: The Chiasm & ch. 5
and "The Working Notes" (passim)

{first paper due}

Mar 12 Derrida, Deconstruction, and Difference
Speech and Phenomena (1967)
"Differance" and "Form and Meaning"

Mar 19 Derrida and Husserl's Theory of Signs–Indication and Expression
Speech and Phenomena (1967)

Mar 26 *The Truth in Painting* (1978)
– "Passe-Partout" and "Restitutions"

Apr 2 **spring recess (April 2-7, 2007)**

Apr 9 *The Truth in Painting* (1978)
- "+R"

Apr 16 *Memoirs of the Blind* (1990)

{second paper due}

Apr 23 *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy* (2000)

Apr 30 *On Touching – Jean-Luc Nancy* (2000)

May 7 **wrap-up session**