

PHIL 469/569: MERLEAU-PONTY

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course will investigate the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) with an eye towards how he understood phenomenological method, as well as his continuing influence on work being done in contemporary phenomenology. The course is focused on a careful reading of Merleau-Ponty's most important work, *Phenomenology of Perception*, and that text's central arguments concerning the phenomenological method and the embodied nature of perception. Later weeks of the course will consider the writings collected in the posthumously published volume *The Visible and the Invisible* and Merleau-Ponty's thoughts on the relationship between phenomenology and ontology. Our discussions will address Merleau-Ponty's historical position on the cusp between French existential phenomenology, structuralism, and poststructuralism. Throughout the course, we will critically examine Merleau-Ponty's ideas in relation to contemporary debates in critical phenomenology, including issues of subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and the lived experience of marginalized bodies. As such, we will be consulting material from gender theory, race theory, and disability studies alongside the primary source material.

Several themes under consideration will be: the philosophical significance of the lived body in perception, the evolution of Merleau-Ponty's method, the relevance of Merleau-Ponty's philosophy for contemporary critical phenomenology, and the limits and scope of phenomenology as a method.