

**TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION:
PHENOMENOLOGY
RELS 4700/6700 & PHIL 4690/6690**

Instructor: Vincent Lloyd
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Office Hours: 12-1.30, Mondays and Wednesdays, and by appointment

Overview:

This course offers a basic introduction to phenomenology with a particular focus on phenomenology of religion. We will be concerned with phenomenology as a philosophical movement beginning with Husserl and continuing to the present that makes claims about the proper foundation for all philosophy. Phenomenologists agree that this proper foundation is somehow pre-cognitive, but disagree about what it is.

The first half of the course is dedicated to a close reading of Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, along with selections from the phenomenological tradition in which Levinas is working (Husserl, Heidegger, Buber, Derrida). Levinas argues that ethics (more specifically, ethical experience in an idiosyncratic sense) must be central to the phenomenological enterprise, and we will explore and evaluate this claim. The second half of the course will explore the work of contemporary phenomenologists who argue that, instead of ethics, the center of the phenomenological enterprise must be ritual, givenness, or life. These contemporary phenomenologists have been accused of taking a "theological turn," and we will explore to what extent this is the case.

Objectives:

By the end of the course the student should be able to:

- 1) Identify important phenomenologists concerned with religion, describe key concepts that they introduce, rehearse key arguments that they make, and offer critiques of those arguments.
- 2) Identify key disputes in phenomenology concerning religion, and evaluate arguments on both sides of these disputes.
- 3) Discuss the relationship of phenomenology to ethics as well as to Jewish and Christian thought.

Required Texts:

- 1) Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay in Exteriority*, trans. A. Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969)
- 2) Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute: Disputed Questions on the Humanity of Man*, trans. M. Raftery-Skehan (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004)
- 3) Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being: Hors-texte*, trans. T. A. Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991)

4) Michel Henry, *I Am the Truth: Towards a Philosophy of Christianity*, trans. S. Emanuel (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003)

Other Readings:

Are available through the GSU library's "e-reserves" (go to <http://www.library.gsu.edu/services/> and click on "Find Course Reserves" from the left column; the password is xmh8gz6nF). You must bring a paper copy of the readings to class during the relevant week.

Meetings and Attendance:

Note that *you* are responsible for finding out what happened in class when you were absent. From the undergraduate catalog: "The resources of the university are provided for the intellectual growth and development of its students; it is expected that students should attend class regularly." Additional weekly meetings with graduate students will be scheduled.

Grading:

50%: Reading Responses

By noon Mondays, e-mail the instructor and classmates in your small group a 300-400 word (undergraduate students) or 600-800 word (graduate students) reflection on the readings (please include it in the body of the e-mail or as a pdf attachment). These reflections should be focused on a specific passage (one sentence or a few sentences) of your choosing from the week's readings. Explain what the passage means and its importance. Undergraduate reading responses will be graded ✓, ✓+, ✓- (corresponding to B, A, C, respectively).

25%: Two 1500 word Essays

Due February 11 and April 1, the first of the essays will expand on one reading response, elaborating the explication and interpretation of a passage from one of the readings. The second essay will explore the relationship between one of the supplementary readings and one of the required readings.

25%: Final Take-home exam (undergraduates) / Final 4000 word essay (MA students)

The take-home exam for undergraduates will be distributed one week before the last day of class and we be due at noon two week later. Graduate students are encouraged to discuss their essay topics with the instructor. Graduate student essays are due one week after the last day of classes.

Schedule:

The course syllabus provides a general plan for the course; deviations may be necessary.
→ indicates required readings; ►► indicates supplementary readings that are recommended for undergraduates and required for graduate students

Week 1: January 5 and 7

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IA

▶▶ Interview with Emmanuel Levinas, “Being-for-the-Other” in *Is it Righteous to Be? Interviews with Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford UP, 2001)

Week 2: January 12 and 14

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IB

▶▶ Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, selections, Smith translation (Scribner, 2000)

Week 3: January 21

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IC, ID

▶▶ Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as a Rigorous Science” in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy* (Harper, 1965)

Week 4: January 26 and 28

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IIA, IIB, IIC

▶▶ Martin Heidegger, *History of the Concept of Time*, selections from Chapters 1 and 2 (Indiana UP, 1985)

Week 5: February 2 and 4

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IIC, IID, IIE

▶▶ Jacques Derrida, “Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas” from Derrida, *Writing and Difference* (U. of Chicago Press, 1978)

Week 6: February 9 and 11

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, III

▶▶ Jacques Derrida, “Force of Law: On the ‘Mystical Foundations of Authority’” from *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice* (Routledge, 1992)

Essay #1 Due Feb. 11

Week 7: February 16 and 18

→ Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, IV

▶▶ Stephen Darwall, *The Second Person Standpoint*, Part I

Week 8: February 23 and 25

→ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, chapters 1 and 2

▶▶ Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking” from Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (Harper, 1971)

[no class: spring break]

Week 9: March 9 and 11

→ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, chapters 3, 4, and 5

▶▶ Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane* (selections) (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987)

Week 10: March 16 and 18

→ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Experience and the Absolute*, chapters 8 and 9

▶▶ Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology” (Fordham UP, 2000), Sections 1 and 2

Week 11: March 23 and 25

→ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, chapters 1 and 2

▶▶ Martin Heidegger, “The Onto-Theo-Logical Constitution of Metaphysics” from Heidegger, *Identity and Difference* (U. of Chicago Press, 2002)

Week 12: March 30 and April 1

→ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, chapters 3, 4, and 5

▶▶ Jean-Luc Marion, “The Other First Philosophy and the Question of Givenness”

Essay #2 Due

Week 13: April 6 and 8

→ Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, chapters 6 and 7

▶▶ Jean-Luc Marion, “The Reason of the Gift” from *Givenness and God* (Fordham UP, 2005)

Week 14: April 13 and 15

→ Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*, Chapters 1-4

▶▶ Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, Fifth Meditation (Springer, 1977)

Week 15: April 20 and 22

→ Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*, Chapters 5-7

▶▶ Michel Henry, “Pathos-With” from *Material Phenomenology* (Fordham UP, 2008)

Week 16: April 27

→ Michel Henry, *I am the Truth*, Chapters 10-13

▶▶ Dominique Janicaud, “The Theological Turn of French Phenomenology” (Fordham UP, 2000), Sections 4 and 5