

**SEMINAR: HUSSERL'S THEORY OF TIME**

Tuesday 14:35—17:25 (Leacock 927)

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Office hours: Tuesday 17:30-19:00 (and by appointment)

**Course Description**

This seminar will conduct a close reading of Edmund Husserl's influential lectures *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time* (henceforth referred to as *PITC*). These lectures constitute some of Husserl's most fascinating and challenging phenomenological work. The challenge of this work owes not only to the complicated and seemingly paradoxical structures of our temporal existence. Difficulties also arise because of the nature of Husserl's project: that of giving a phenomenological description of what is after all an inner experience—an experience in which the consciousness of time does not separate out easily from the flow of time itself. In this sense, *PITC* represents not only a study of the temporality of consciousness, or the consciousness of time, but also an investigation into the nature of consciousness and intentionality, themes central to phenomenology in general.

*PITC* groups together Husserl's thinking on time from 1893-1917, but these lectures continued to inform Husserl's later theorizing about time in the 1920s, even while Husserl was questioning and revising his earlier thinking. We will turn to one instance of this later theory of time, found in Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis (APS)*. There, Husserl views temporality as a form of passive synthesis, intimately related to affectivity.

*PITC* has generated a great deal of phenomenological scholarship. It has spurred multiple appropriations, critiques and re-interpretations by later phenomenologists and critics of phenomenology. At the end of this course, we will turn to three such appropriations in the French context (a list which is by no means exhaustive). We will read these in order of their influence for contemporary Husserlian scholarship (which does not correspond to their chronological order): Jacques Derrida, Emmanuel Levinas, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. (Other secondary sources may be added depending on time and on the input of the seminar participants.)

This seminar is organized according to the following aims:

- (i) **Weeks 2-7** will concentrate on Husserl's lectures *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time*. Our study will include the lectures themselves and their appendices, as well as a selection from the supplements to the text. These supplements show Husserl in the process of rethinking and questioning his own theory. Our aim will be to read these lectures together closely and to arrive at an understanding both of Husserl's theory of time-consciousness and of the problems that this theory encounters.
- (ii) **Week 8-10** will involve a discussion of selections from Husserl's *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, particularly those sections pertaining to the relation of

affectivity and temporality. The aim will be to see how Husserl's thinking on time evolved and to understand Husserl's self-critique with respect to his earlier theory.

- (iii) In **weeks 11-13** we will turn to various later appropriations and critiques of Husserl's theory of time, in particular those of Derrida, Levinas and Merleau-Ponty.

**Prerequisite: PHIL 474/475 or written permission of the instructor.**

**Seminars are open only to graduate students and final year Philosophy Majors, Honours and Joint Honours students, except by written permission of the Department.**

### Texts

Texts available in Paragraphe Bookstore and on Reserve:

Edmund Husserl, *On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time (1893-1917)*, trans. John Barnett Brough (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991). [PITC] REQUIRED.

Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on transcendental logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 162-269. [APS] Optional to purchase, also available in course folder.

Texts available in Course Folder in Leacock 908:

Edmund Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on transcendental logic*, trans. Anthony J. Steinbock (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), pp. 162-269. [APS]

Jacques Derrida, "Signs and the Blink of an Eye," in *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the problem of the sign in Husserl's phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

Emmanuel Levinas, "Intentionality and Sensation," in *Discovering Existence with Husserl*, trans. Richard A. Cohen and Michael B. Smith (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. 135-150.

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "Temporality," in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Secondary sources will be added to the folder throughout the term.

### Assignments and Grades

#### **(1) QUESTION / PRESENTATION 20%**

Each student is required to present **one question** in class during the term. The question must be submitted electronically to the instructor by 5 PM on the Monday prior to its presentation in class. You are expected to **give a short presentation (10 minutes)**, elaborating your question in class, and to facilitate the discussion stemming from it.

#### **(2) TERM PAPER 50%**

The term paper should be approximately **12-14 pages** in length (for undergraduates), **18-20 pages** in length (for graduate students). *The topic of this paper is to be designed by you, in consultation with the instructors.* (It is recommended that you begin work on this paper early, since you may need to consult some secondary sources for the purpose.) **Due date to be announced.**

- (3) TERM PAPER PROPOSAL** **10%**  
You should submit a paper proposal in which you describe your topic, justify its relevance, and list the sources you will be using in developing it. Proposals should be **approximately 300 words. DUE APRIL 3<sup>rd</sup> in class.**
- (4) ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION** **20%**

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*In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.*

*In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change.*