

UBC's Point Grey Campus is located on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) people. The land it is situated on has always been a place of learning for the Musqueam people, who for millennia have passed on in their culture, history, and traditions from one generation to the next on this site.

Course Title, Time and Location	Course Code Number	Credit Value
Topics in Continental Philosophy Mon, Wed, Fri 3:00-4:00 pm BUCH D 218 In person	PHIL 448 001	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mon, Wed 4:00-5:00 pm in person or on Zoom

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sexuality and Embodiment in Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology

Nineteenth-century psychiatry was invested in the assumption that there was a natural function to the sexual instincts. This allowed it to arbitrarily class together homosexuality, masochism, sadism, and fetishism as similar kinds of pathologies. By assuming that the normal or natural functioning of the sexual instinct was heterosexual copulation aimed at procreation, it could also assume that anything outside of this kind of behavior was dysfunctional and perverse.

This course explores how notions of perversion were questioned and undermined by two continental traditions: psychoanalysis and phenomenology. It explores the relationship between the “normal” and the “pathological” through philosophical accounts of embodiment and sexuality. We begin with a reading of Sigmund Freud’s *Three Essays on Sexuality*. We then examine Freud’s accounts of femininity and homosexuality alongside critiques by Luce Irigaray. Next, Jacques Lacan’s articulation of the position of desire will be considered with a response from Judith Butler on the lesbian phallus. Finally, we read Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Sara Ahmed to consider the role of phenomenology in broadening our understanding of the healthy desiring body and what it means to be a sexual (and sexed) being today.

This is a seminar style course with class discussion. Credit will be granted for only one of PHIL 448 or PHIL 449.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students are expected to read the materials before class and come prepared to take part in discussion.

The following texts are available from the bookstore (and can also be found in LOCR):

-Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (The 1905 Edition)*, trans. Ulrike Kistner, eds. Phillippe Van Haute and Herman Westerink, London: Verso, 2016.

-Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*, trans. Gillian C. Gill, New York: Cornell University Press, 1985.

-Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, London: Duke University Press, 2006.

Excerpts from and Merleau-Ponty's, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2021 as well as other readings will be made available through the Library Online Course Reserves (LOCR) or will be available in pdf form on the Canvas page under the section "Modules" (pdf).

The schedule includes all of the readings.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Midterm Exam 30% during Week 8.

Final Essay 60% (3000-3500 words) due April 11.

Participation 10% (class attendance and participation in class discussion).

Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 3:00- 4:00 PM

Week 1: Introducing the Two Traditions. How is Psychoanalysis Philosophical?

January 10-14: Sexuality and Embodiment in Psychoanalysis and Phenomenology

(I) Freud, "The Claims of Psycho-Analysis to Scientific Interest."

(II) Freud, "Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning."

(III) Arnold Davidson, "How to Do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." *Critical Inquiry* 13.2: pp.252-277.

Week 2: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Jan 17-21: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: I The Sexual Aberrations."

Week 3: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Jan 24-28: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: II Infantile Sexuality."

Week 4: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Jan 31- Feb 4: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: III The Transformations of Puberty."

Week 5: On Femininity: Freud and Irigaray

Feb 7-11: (I) Freud, "Lecture XXXIII: Femininity," SEXXII.
(II) Irigaray, "Woman's Science's Unknown" and "The Little Girl (Is Only a Little Boy)"
Speculum of the Other Woman, pp.13-34.
Further reading: Steinem, "What if Freud were Phyllis?"

Week 6: Homosexuality: Freud, Irigaray, Butler

February 14-18: (I) Freud, "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman,"
SEXVIII.
(II) Irigaray, "Female Hom(m)osexuality" in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, pp. 98-104.
(III) Butler, "1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" in *Gender Trouble*.

**Midterm taken home exam questions posted Feb. 18*

Week 7: Feb 21-25: Midterm Break

Week 8: Feb 28- March 4: **Exams during class and office hours**

Week 9: The Phallus and the Position of Desire

March 7-11: Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus."
Further reading: Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," Chapter 2, in
Bodies That Matter.

Week 10: Merleau-Ponty on The Body Schema and Orientation

March 14-18: Merleau-Ponty, "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," in
Phenomenology of Perception.

**Essay topics and guidelines posted March 14*

Week 11: Embodiment in Merleau-Ponty

March 21-25: Merleau-Ponty, "The Body in its Sexual Being," and "The Body as Expression
and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Week 12: Ahmed on Orientation

March 28-April 1: Ahmed, Chapter 2, "Sexual Orientation," in *Queer Phenomenology*.

Week 13: Ahmed on Racialization and Orientation

April 4-8: Ahmed, Chapter 3, "The Orient and Other Others," and "Conclusion: Disorientation
and Queer Object," in *Queer Phenomenology*.

Final Essay due April 11

LEARNING OUTCOMES

During the course, students will learn about the concepts of the “normal” and the “pathological” through philosophical accounts of embodiment and sexuality in psychoanalysis and phenomenology. They will practice talking and thinking critically about the associated arguments and ideas. The midterm exam provides an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of the key concepts studied to date. The final paper is an exercise in critical thinking to explore and deepen understanding of one or more of the concepts and thinkers studied during the course. By the end of the term, students will be familiar with problems related to psychoanalytic and phenomenological descriptions of sexuality and embodiment.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES AND SUPPORT

UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available on **[the UBC Senate website](#)**.

Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below

<http://www.calendar.ubc.ca/Vancouver/index.cfm?tree=3,54,111,959>

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