

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 12-1 pm TBA	PHIL 448 001 2025 W2	3 credits

Course Instructor	Contact Details	Office Location	Office Hours
Dr. Willow Verkerk	willow.verkerk@ubc.ca	BUCH E 158	Mon, Wed 1-2 pm

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 and alternative accounts by Judith Butler. After this Jacques Lacan’s articulation of the position of desire will be considered with a response from Judith Butler on the lesbian phallus. Next, 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. Ahmed, by way of Frantz Fanon, makes an important contribution to understanding the phenomenological experience of racialization, as well as proposing a new phenomenological account of queer embodiment.

This is a seminar style course with class discussion.

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 the Library Online Course Reserves or LOCR):

- Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (The 1905 Edition)*, trans. Ulrike Kistner, eds. Phillipe 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.
- Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Donald A. Landes, Routledge, 2012.

The schedule includes all the readings.

ASSESSMENTS OF LEARNING

Midterm Exam 30% during Week 8- February 23-27 (posted February 13).
Class Presentation 10% (sign up during first week of class)
Final Essay 50% (3000-3500 words) due April 10 (posted March 6).
Participation 10% (class attendance and participation in class discussion).
Assignments are submitted on Canvas.

SCHEDULE: MON, WED, FRI 12-1 PM

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

January 5-7: 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.

Jan 9: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: I The Sexual Aberrations."

Week 2: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Jan 12-14: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: I The Sexual Aberrations."

Jan 16: "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: II Infantile Sexuality."

Week 3: Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality

Jan 19: Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: II Infantile Sexuality."

Jan 21-23: "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality: III The Transformations of Puberty."

Week 4: On Femininity: Freud and Irigaray

Jan 26-30: (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 5: Homosexuality: Freud, Irigaray, Butler

February 2-6: (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*.

Week 6: The Phallus and the Position of Desire

Feb 9-13: Lacan, "The Meaning of the Phallus."
Further reading: Butler, "The Lesbian Phallus and the Morphological Imaginary," Chapter 2, in *Bodies That Matter*.

Midterm exam questions posted Feb. 13

Week 7: February 16-20: Family Day and Midterm Break

Week 8: Feb 23-27: **Exams during class and office hours**

Week 9: Merleau-Ponty on The Body Schema and Orientation

March 2-6: Merleau-Ponty, "The Spatiality of One's Own Body and Motility," in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Essay topics and guidelines posted March 6

Week 10: Embodiment and Sexuality in Merleau-Ponty

March 9-13: Merleau-Ponty, "The Body in its Sexual Being," in *Phenomenology of Perception*.

Week 11: Embodiment and the Flesh in Merleau-Ponty

March 16-20: "The Body as Expression and Speech," in *Phenomenology of Perception* and "The Intertwining--The Chiasm" (Part IV of the *Visible and the Invisible*).

Week 12: Ahmed on Orientation

March 23-27: Ahmed, Chapter 2, "Sexual Orientation," in *Queer Phenomenology*.

Week 13: Final Essay Prep and Discussion

March 30- April 1: Final Essay Preparation and Discussion

April 3 and 6: Holidays- Good Friday and Easter Monday

Week 14: Ahmed on Embodiment, Racialization, and Sexuality and Closing Discussion

April 8-10: Ahmed, Chapter 3, "The Orient and Other Others" and "Conclusion: Disorientation and Queer Object," in *Queer Phenomenology*

Final Essay due April 10

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 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 their 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>

The use of *Chat GPT* and similar online resources is considered “cheating” in the UBC policy if students make unauthorized use of this tool in the creation of assignments or on exams (“use...of unauthorized means to complete an examination or coursework...including, but not limited to, ...accessing websites or other online resources not specifically permitted by the instructor or examiner”).

COPYRIGHT

All materials of this course (videos, course handouts, lecture slides, assessments, course readings, etc.) are the intellectual property of the Course Instructor or licensed to be used in this course by the copyright owner. Redistribution of these materials by any means without permission of the copyright holder(s) constitutes a breach of copyright and may lead to academic discipline.

Audio recordings of the class are allowed (video recordings and photographs are not permitted).