

Course Syllabus

Course: PHL 565 *Desire and Distance*: Renaud Barbares' Reading of Merleau-Ponty

Day/Time/Location: Mondays 3:00 pm – 6:15 pm, Clifton Room 150.33

Professor: Frédéric Seyler

Office Hours: Mondays 1-2:30 pm or by appointment.

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Course Outline

Renaud Barbares is the leading figure of contemporary phenomenology in France today. With *Desire and Distance* (1999, English translation 2005), Barbares – already established as a Merleau-Ponty scholar (*The Being of the Phenomenon: Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*, Engl. 2004) – breaks through toward an original phenomenology of life that will be continued systematically in *Introduction à une phénoménologie de la vie* (2008) as well as in the recent *Dynamique de la manifestation* (2013), all heavily indebted to Merleau-Ponty's concepts of perception and embodiment.

Our seminar will thus be discussing the most recent phenomenological research and debates that are currently taking place in France, while allowing for a new and creative reading of Merleau-Ponty. We will focus on Barbares' *Desire and Distance* and include references to key aspects of Merleau-Ponty's thought (through a parallel reading of *The Being of the Phenomenon* as well as through excerpts from Merleau-Ponty). At the end of the seminar, we will open the debate between Barbares and two key figures of contemporary French philosophy: Bergson and Michel Henry, whom Barbares explicitly discusses in two chapters.

The wide range of authors discussed by Barbares (Merleau-Ponty, of course, but also Husserl, Bergson, Patocka, Heidegger, Henry, for instance) provides an equally wide range of possible seminar papers.

Required Reading

Renaud Barbares, *Le désir et la distance*. Paris: Vrin: 1999. English translation: *Desire and Distance*. Stanford: Stanford UP 2006. ISBN: 9780804746458

+ additional chapters and excerpts from other works.

Recommended Supplementary Readings

Renaud Barbares, *De l'être du phénomène. Sur l'ontologie de Merleau-Ponty*. Grenoble: Jérôme Millon 1991. English translation: *The Being of the Phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty's Ontology*. Bloomington: Indiana UP 2004. ISBN: 9780253343550

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Basic Writings*. London: Routledge 2003. ISBN: 97804153158765

Tentative Schedule

(NB: The schedule – as well as this syllabus – is subject to possible changes. If you miss a class, please check the assignments/dates with a classmate)

JAN 8: Introduction; DD 9-29/1-18; BP 9-17/XXVII-XXXIV

JAN 15: *Martin Luther King Day – University officially closed*

JAN 22: DD 31-61/19-43; BP 85-134/68-111

JAN 29: DD 62-82/44-61; BP 135-165/111-139

FEB 2: DD 82-103/62-80; BP 181-234/147-203

FEB 12: DD 103-132/81-107; BP 235-262/204-228

FEB 19: DD 133-156/108-127; BP 277-320/235-279

FEB 26: DD 157-170/128-152; BP 345-368/301-320

MAR 5: Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception, Part Three (Excerpt)*

MAR 12: *Bergson and Phenomenology* (R. Barbaras in discussion with Bergson) and *The Essence of Life: Desire or Drive?* (R. Barbaras in discussion with Michel Henry); Conclusion of the seminar

Requirements

1. **A final double-spaced paper (4500-6000 words)** due on **Monday March 19th 3 pm latest**. Please forward both an electronic copy and a hardcopy by that date. No incompletes will be given for this course. Papers should follow usual article guidelines (footnotes, bibliography) and include the word-count.
2. **One 10-15 minutes protocol-presentation** (a summary of the preceding class and *ending with a question*, between 900-1200 words). The student in charge of the presentation will present her/his paper at the beginning of the next class.
3. **One 10 minutes analysis-presentation** (max. 1200 words and *ending with a question*) that analyzes a selected text-excerpt.
4. **Participation:** seminar participation is expected of every student.
5. **Attendance:** everyone is allowed one absence for the quarter. Any more than one absence will result in the lowering of the final grade one to two notches.

Grading

Final paper = 70% of the final grade

Presentations & Participation = 30%

Presentation schedule (protocol date in bold, text-analysis date normal)

JAN 8, MAR 5

JAN 22, FEB 26

JAN 29, FEB 19

FEB 2, FEB 12

FEB 12, JAN 22

FEB 19, JAN 29

FEB 26, FEB 2

MAR 5, MAR 12