

Course Outline

Mode of Teaching: online until further notice

Time : Monday 13:30 – 16:15

Course Outline

While Helmuth Plessner is often considered to be one of the most important German philosophers of the twentieth century, his *Levels of Organic Life and the Human: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology* is his most important work and a masterpiece in the field of philosophical anthropology. Until recently, this work, which draws on phenomenological, biological and social scientific sources in its systematic account of nature, life and human existence, was little known to the English-speaking world. Although the work was published in 1928, its first English translation appeared only in 2019, thereby finally making this work more accessible to the English-speaking community. This graduate seminar will introduce you to the philosophical anthropology, understood as a particular philosophical approach within the twentieth century philosophy, through a careful study of this work, which is commonly viewed as the most important study in philosophical anthropology.

Learning outcomes

1. Demonstrate a solid grasp of the issues discussed.
2. Analyze and critically interpret some significant primary texts in modern Western philosophy.
3. Demonstrate an enhanced ability to conduct independent research on the topics covered and related issues.

Topics

1. The Foundations of philosophical anthropology
2. Definitions of Life
3. Temporality and spatiality of living beings
4. The sphere of the plant
5. The sphere of the animal
6. The sphere of the human
7. The “I” and Personhood
8. Law of Natural Artificiality
9. Law of Mediate Immediacy
10. Law of Utopian Standpoint: Nullity and Transcendence

Learning activities

In this course, you are expected to

- read and think about the assigned readings;
- develop the skills mentioned in the course outcomes through philosophical discussion and writing (essays, take home exams, and critical summaries of tutorial readings);
- attend lectures/tutorials to participate in discussion.

Activities and workload:

In-class (mandatory):

1. Lectures will be conducted in a seminar fashion: 2 hours each week.
2. Reading: approximately 2-3 hours on the basic and suggested readings each week.
3. Writing assignments: an average of 1 hour each week on preparing and writing essay assignments throughout the term. You should try to design a schedule that allows you to apportion more time on writing and discussing your essay with your teacher two to three weeks before each essay is due.

Assessment scheme

The assessment methods are designed to encourage participation and learning through argumentative writing and active participation.

Task nature	Description	Weight
Participation in Discussions	Discussions	20%
Two Reflective Summaries	Each around 1000 words	20%
Seminar Presentations	ca. 20 minute long	20%
Term paper	Around 2500 words	40%

Remarks:

1. Participation in Lectures/Seminars: Grading is based on meaningful participation in discussions. Absence will damage your grades.
2. Reflective Summaries: Your essay should be approximately two single-spaced typewritten pages. You are supposed to a) provide at least a one page long summary of the assigned readings (or longer), b) identify what you consider to be the most important point(s) in the readings (philosophically, with argumentation) (at least one paragraph), c) identify what in the readings raises most questions for reflection (philosophically, with argumentation, one paragraph). Your critical summary should be approximately 1000 words long.
3. Seminar Presentation: Details will be announced in class.
4. The term paper: you may choose to write on any philosophical problem addressed in this course. You will be asked to submit a preliminary statement on a chosen topic. You will be expected to do some independent research, to formulate a central thesis as well as to develop arguments in support of it. The due date of this assignment will be announced in class towards the end of the semester.

Grade Descriptor

Please refer to: http://phil.arts.cuhk.edu.hk/~phidept/UG/Grade_descriptors.pdf

Details of course website

Relevant announcements and course documents will be posted on Blackboard.

Required text

Helmuth Plessner, *Levels of Organic Life and the Human: An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*

Course schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Topics</i>	<i>Required reading and Assignments</i>
Jan. 11	Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology	
Jan. 18	Foundations for a Philosophy of the Human	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. I
Jan 25	The Cartesian Objection	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. II
Feb. 1	The Reformulation of the Opening Question	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. II
Feb 8	The Thesis of the Study	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. III
Feb 22	Essential Characteristics of the Organic	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. III
March 1	The Modes of Being of Vitality	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. IV (extracts)
March 8	Plants and Animals and the Organizational Modes	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. V (extracts)
March 15	The Sphere of the Animal	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. VI
March 22	The Sphere of the Animal	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. VI
March 29	Reading Week	(TBA)
April 12	The Sphere of the Human	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. VII
April 19	The Sphere of the Human	Helmuth Plessner, <i>Level's of Organic Life and the Human</i> , Ch. VII

Contact details for teacher(s) or TA(s)

Teacher	
Name:	Prof. GENIUSAS Saulius Haroldas
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Academic honesty and plagiarism

Attention is drawn to University policy and regulations on honesty in academic work, and to the disciplinary guidelines and procedures applicable to breaches of such policy and regulations. Details may be found at <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk/policy/academichonesty/>

For assignments in the form of a computer-generated document that is principally text-based and submitted via VeriGuide, the statement, in the form of a receipt, will be issued by the system upon students' uploading of the soft copy of the assignment. Assignments without the receipt will not be graded by teachers. Only the final version of the assignment should be submitted via VeriGuide.