



VIU
Graduate
Seminar
CRITICAL
PHENOMENOLOGY:
THEORY AND
APPLICATIONS

**Critical Phenomenology:
Theory and Applications**

June 2-6, 2025

**Venice International University
Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

VIU Graduate Seminar

Critical Phenomenology: Theory and Applications

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University

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Scientific Coordinator
Andrea Altobrando
University of Padua

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Valentina Bortolami
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VIU Global Challenges
Initiatives

The idea that critical thinking helps to better society is at the core of philosophy. But how should critique be carried out in order to be effective? How to capture the situations one aims at healing, and how to get properly into view the ones aimed for?

The Graduate Seminar “Critical Phenomenology” is dedicated to an emerging branch of philosophy that engages with crucial global debates, focusing on pressing topics like health, gender, and discrimination, making it engaging to a community that extends beyond the ranks of philosophers.

Phenomenology has gained significant traction in recent decades, particularly due to a scientific rehabilitation of the first-person perspective and the realization of the cultural and bodily conditionality of experience. Critical Phenomenology embosses the contemporary relevance of phenomenology, concentrating particularly on the interdisciplinary nature of critical discourse, encompassing philosophy, and social, political, and psychological sciences. It is an “ameliorative phenomenology” (Weiss, Murphy, and Salamon 2019), expands the conceptual framework and theoretical analyses of the tradition with the aim of denaturalizing the taken-for-granted assumptions and presuppositions that operate at the level of the natural attitude and integrates and revises concepts from classical and existentialist phenomenological traditions to create a more inclusive and intersectional phenomenological analysis.

Critical Phenomenology inherits methods from both critical theory and phenomenology. It utilizes phenomenology’s descriptive method to explore how individual consciousness and social life experiences are constantly conditioned by power structures, social norms, and cultural representations. It deepens the relationship between the traditional phenomenological inquiry around first-person experiences, and the wider context of these experiences, heeding topics such as embodiment and social identity. By directly engaging with cases and problems posed by feminist and antiracist philosophy, queer

studies, disability studies, and medical humanities, Critical Phenomenology aims at achieving a better understanding of the practical-political dimension of individuals and improving discourses and practices to develop new forms of coexistence. Therefore, Critical Phenomenology ultimately aims at establishing knowledge and practices of resistance, cooperation, and solidarity concerning situations of oppression, alienation, and discrimination.

This Graduate Seminar will be led by

- University of Padua, Italy
- University of Exeter, United Kingdom
- Boston College, USA

Faculty

Andrea Altobrando, University of Padova

Elena Billwiller, University of Padova

Valentina Bortolami, University of Padova

Christine Daigle, Brock University

Luna Dolezal, University of Exeter

Rebecca Lynch, University of Exeter

Elisa Magrì, Boston College

Paddy McQueen, Swansea University

Elif Yavnik, Sabanci University

Methodology

The Graduate Seminar will involve a combination of frontal lectures and interactive, and workshop-like activities. Open discussions with the participants will be stimulated and debates animated.

Topics

- Phenomenology as description of phenomena
- The function of description in the formation of critical attitudes
- What is “critical” in phenomenology and Critical Phenomenology
- Phenomenological relevance of socio-political dimensions (e.g., gender, race, ability)
- Socio-political dimensions and first-person experiences
- Identity, identities, and diversity
- Embodiment, health, and illness
- Phenomenology, embodiment, and shame
- Phenomenology and emotions

- Phenomenology and anthropology
- Phenomenology and psychology
- Embodiment and affect in health research
- Methodological and epistemological aspects of Critical Phenomenology: tradition, pluralism, interdisciplinary.

Learning outcomes for participants

Students will acquire a robust toolkit to grasp the distinctive aspects of critical phenomenology, delving into its unique characteristics and exploring its correlation with classical phenomenology during lectures. Moreover, they will be actively encouraged to cultivate critical thinking and sharpen essential skills in listening, hermeneutics, and effective communication by actively participating in interactive seminars, debates, and roundtable discussions. This active involvement will also enhance their ability to engage in dialogue, collaborate effectively, and navigate disagreements. Throughout this seminar, students will become acquainted both with the methodologies intrinsic to philosophy and with interdisciplinary approaches. By doing so, students will not only refine their philosophical acumen but also develop a comprehensive perspective that transcends disciplinary boundaries, preparing them for comprehensive analysis and thoughtful engagement with complex societal and philosophical issues.

Who can apply?

This Graduate Seminar is offered to advanced Master, PhD students and junior researchers in Humanities (Philosophy, Medical Humanities, Gender Studies, Critical Theory), Political Sciences, Social Sciences, and Health Sciences.

Fees & Grant Support

Students from the VIU member institutions will pay no participation fees. Grant support is also available to support, partially or fully, the costs of international travel and accommodation. The participation fee for students of non-member institutions is Euro 1.150 VAT included. The fee is inclusive of tuition, course materials, accommodation, lunches, social events and taxes. Students from non-member institutions are not

eligible for VIU grant support. VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

Credits

Participation in the Graduate Seminar is considered equivalent to **2 ECTS**.

The program is available on the VIU website.

Applications

December 2, 2024– February 2, 2025 via the VIU website

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation – which should include a brief description of the candidate’s research interests, a curriculum vitae, and a photo.

VIU Graduate Seminars

These are thematic intensive seminars given in a concentrated period on subjects of universal interest, open to a broad spectrum of disciplines. They are suited to both Master’s and PhD students as well as junior researchers and are open to candidates from all the VIU member institutions. The young researchers will receive support in defining their research proposal. Significant cooperation among departments in the member institutions is expected.

Venice International University is a consortium of 23 institutions, representing 15 countries throughout the world. The mission of VIU is to foster cooperation among VIU member institutions while facilitating the exchange of knowledge and ideas, by developing, promoting and organizing joint academic, research, and training/capacity-building programs. Students from non-member institutions may participate in selected academic programs. The academic programs at VIU are distinguished by a markedly interdisciplinary approach to the topics, and by the international perspectives that the participants contribute to the discussions. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice, Italy.

Location



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