

California Institute of Integral Studies
Philosophy and Religion Program
Women's Spirituality Concentration
Fall 2008

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Embodied, Embedded Philosophy

PARW 7116 / PARP 7116 (1 unit, 1 weekend)

10 October (6:15-8:30); 11 October (9:00-4:30); 12 October (9:00-4:30)

Description of Course Content

The cutting edge of philosophy lies not in postmodern constructivism but in the biological, ecological, and cosmological awakening. This course analyzes both the problem (the West's long "dogmatic slumber" in a trance of disembodied, disembedded assumptions) and the emergent corrections and creative possibilities. Students will participate in the current quest for philosophy that acknowledges our embodiedness and our embeddedness in subtle ecological/cosmological processes.

The course is divided into five class meetings: In the first session (Friday evening), the focus is a critical overview of assumptions of disembodiedness and disembeddedness in the Western philosophical tradition – and their continuation by deconstructive postmodernism.

In the second session (Saturday morning), the focus is pioneering philosophers who have significantly advanced recognition of the implications of embodiedness, embeddedness, or both. These include David Abram, Alfred North Whitehead, Luce Irigaray, Mark Johnson and George Lakoff, Linda Holler, and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone. (This short list is not exclusive.)

In the third session (Saturday afternoon), we will continue and complete our discussion of the assigned readings in postmechanistic philosophy that we began in the morning. After the break, we will move into a new unit: we will seek to identify the subtle *processes* that inform our embodied, embedded constructing of concepts, culture, and society. That is, we seek to gather postmechanistic findings – that is, what is now known from contemporary science -- about (1) cosmological/quantum processes, (2) ecological processes (humans-in-nature, interactions with bioregions, interactions with animals), (3) inter-human dynamics and sexuate difference, and (4) internal bodymind processes (with attention to the dimorphic nature of the human species). Students will join one of the four groups in which these areas of postmechanistic findings will be discussed. (Students may do a bit of online research that evening regarding their group's topic, if they wish.)

In the fourth session (Sunday morning), each group will present their collective accumulation of examples of postmechanistic findings regarding embodiedness, embeddedness, and dynamic process. We will then discuss the implications of these findings for a new sense of some of the traditional branches of Western philosophy: metaphysics/ontology, epistemology, cosmology, and ethics (political and social philosophy).

During the final session (Sunday afternoon), we will re-do Western philosophy! We will discuss, for instance, appropriate metaphors for expressing implications of embodiedness, embeddedness, and dynamic process. Students will write a paper in which they propose a rethinking -- in a postCartesian, postmechanistic mode -- of one or two central concepts in one branch of philosophy. They will draw on the work of the pioneering contemporary philosophers and the findings reported by the four groups on the

embedding *processes* of body, nature, and society. The result will be embodied eco-social philosophy.

Summary of Educational Purpose

The goal of the course is for students to become knowledgeable about (1) the problematic aspects of disembodied, disembedded assumptions in Western philosophy; (2) the pioneering alternatives by contemporary philosophers; (3) the relevant discoveries from science about subtle dynamics of cosmos, earth community, bioregion, interpersonal relations, sexuate difference, and the bodymind; and (4) the process of creating embodied, embedded philosophical thought. We will focus on the core questions facing a postmechanistic approach to philosophy.

Learning Objectives

After completing this course, students will be

- knowledgeable about the assumptions of disembodied, disembedded philosophy in the Western tradition,
- familiar with the leading critics and contemporary philosophers who are creating embodied, embedded philosophical thought,
- informed about the latest relevant postmechanistic discoveries from science, and
- experienced in attempting to create (a bit of) postmechanistic philosophy.

Learning Activities

In-class: two-thirds of the time for lecture, one-third for discussion; group work and Presentation; paper due at the end of the course

Out of class: actively engaged reading of all the assignments; writing

Criteria for Evaluation

Course paper = 65%

Class participation = 35%

Level of Instruction: M.A. and Ph.D. (open to BAC students, with OK by the professor)

Class Size: Open

Grading Options: Student's Choice of a letter grade or P/NP

Prerequisites: A background in Western philosophy is highly recommended. Absent that, students are urged to read *The Passion of the Western Mind* by Richard Tarnas before the course begins.

Required Texts: *The Resurgence of the Real* by Charlene Spretnak

Recommended Texts: *The Body in the Mind* by Mark Johnson

Earth Muse by Carol Bigwood

Giving the Body Its Due, edited by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone

The Spell of the Sensuous by David Abram

Erotic Morality: The Role of Touch in Moral Agency by Linda Holler

The Ethics of Sexual Difference by Luce Irigaray

Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World by Edward S. Casey

For Love of Matter: A Contemporary Panpsychism by

Freya Mathews
The Function of Reason by Alfred North Whitehead
Radical Nature by Christian de Quincey
Philosophy in the Flesh by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson

Articles: All assigned articles can be found in the CIIS Library's on-line Electronic Reserve system. Go to <http://reserve.ciis.edu>; click on Library, then on "Electronic Reserves and Course Materials"; click on Spretnak; click on "Embodied, Embedded Philosophy"; enter the class password (MMPhil). When the course page opens, you will see that the readings are groups according to the class in which they are due (to have been read). The title of each article is the link that will take you to the text, which you should download and print.

Note: If you have problems getting to the readings, contact EResHelp@ciis.edu or Marion Severy, the librarian who is in charge of ERes: phone her at 415-575-6187 or e-mail her at msevery@ciis.edu. Readings will be posted several weeks prior to the beginning of the course.

Lecture Topics and Reading Assignments

10 October, Friday evening

Class 1. Introduction and Overview

Critique(s) of the disembodied and disembedded-from-nature stance in traditional Western philosophy and in deconstructive postmodernism

Read: -- Ch. 2 and pp. 131-143 in *The Resurgence of the Real* by CS

-- "A Survey of De-Realization in Modern Philosophy: From Idealism to Postmodernism" by Freya Mathews (ERes)

11 October, Saturday morning

Class 2. Discussion of Some Pioneering Postmechanistic Philosophers

Read: -- Excerpts from *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (pp. 3-8 and 551-559; ERes)

-- Excerpt from *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* by David Abram (pp. 31-69; ERes)

-- Excerpt from *Giving the Body Its Due* by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (ERes)

-- Excerpt on embodied being by David Michael Levin (ERes)

-- Excerpts from *The Body in the Mind: The Bodily Basis of Meaning, Imagination, and Reason* by Mark Johnson (pp. ix-xiii and pp. 207-212; ERes)

-- Excerpt on "embodied implacement" from *Getting Back into Place* by Edward S. Casey (ERes)

Presentations on the philosophies of Whitehead and Irigaray

11 October, Saturday afternoon

Class 3. Part I. Continuation of Pioneering Postmechanistic Philosophy

- Read: -- “Radical Nonduality in Ecofeminist Philosophy” by CS (ERes)
 -- “Thinking with the Weight of the Earth” by Linda Holler (ERes)

Part II. Relevant Findings from Contemporary Science

Small group work in the following areas:

- (a) cosmological/quantum processes;
- (b) ecological processes (humans-in-nature, interactions with bioregions, interactions with animals);
- (c) inter-human dynamics (with attention to sexuate difference); and
- (d) internal bodymind processes (with attention to the dimorphic nature of the human species, that is, sexuate difference).

12 October, Sunday morning

Class 4. Relevant Revelations from Postmechanistic Science

- Reports from the four groups
- Discussion of the implications for philosophy

12 October, Sunday afternoon

Class 5. Toward an Embodied, Embedded Philosophy

- Presentation and discussion of elements of an embodied, embedded philosophy
- Guidelines for the paper
- Written evaluation of the course
- Conclusion of course