

Stony Brook University
Spring 2023

PHI 520: Advanced Studies in Philosophy

**Process Experientialism, Mind-Matter Monism, and Nonlocal Metaphysics:
Bergson, Dewey, L.A. Paul, Malpas, Spinoza, Quantum Physics, Whitehead,
Mereotopology, Varzi, and de la Bellacasa**

Professor Edward Casey

Meeting Time: TBD (in-person if and when possible; via Zoom otherwise)

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Office Hours: TBD

Course Description:

In “Introduction to Metaphysics” from *The Creative Mind*, Henri Bergson articulates a distinction between intuition and analysis which opens metaphysics through a personally experienced relation to the spiritual Absolute. Alfred North Whitehead, contemporaneous with Bergson and even his predecessor in certain modes, wrote extensively on mathematics — especially symbolic logic and mereotopology; on metaphysics — especially drawing on his expertise in mathematics as well as concurrent developments in quantum mechanics; and on processional experience — particularly seeking a process metaphysics, rather than an ontology, which would serve as a common frame of reference and understanding for philosophy, science, and mathematics alike ——— i.e., a polymathic theory of everything. This seminar focuses on A.N. Whitehead’s magnum opus *Process and Reality* as an anchoring thread for exploring his larger corpus as well as his aspectual perspective on our shared Real — i.e., Whitehead’s intuition. Moreover, the philosophy of intuition, the science of quantum mechanics, the mathematics of mereotopology, and general human subjectivity have all witnessed extensive developments in the ninety-four years since Whitehead published *P&R*. As such, we will explore recent developments in these fields to pursue the manners in which these developments refute or force clarification on Whitehead’s process metaphysics. We hope to shift metaphysics to pragmatics without diminishing the richness of its particular fold within the polymathic manifold of existence. This is a writing intensive independent study.

Required Texts:

Henri Bergson. “Introduction to Metaphysics.” *The Creative Mind: An Introduction to Metaphysics*. Dover. 2010 [1903-1923].

———. *Matter and Memory*.

Alfred North Whitehead. *The Aims of Education*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1929.

———. *Process and Reality*. 1929.

L.A. Paul. "Phenomenal Feel as Process." *Philosophical Issues: A Supplement to Noûs*, Vol. 27. 2017. DOI: 10.1111/phs.12095.

———. "Logical Parts." *Noûs*, Vol. 36, No. 4. December 2002. 578-96.

———. "Aspect Causation." *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 97, No. 4. April 2000. 235-56.

John Dewey. *Experience and Education*. New York: MacMillan Company, 1938.

———. *Experience and Nature*. Dover. 2000 [1925].

Baruch Spinoza. *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, in *Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.

———. *Ethics*, in *Complete Works*, trans. Samuel Shirley, ed. Michael L. Morgan. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002.

María Puig de la Bellacasa. *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. University of Minnesota Press, 2017.

Giorgio Lando. *Mereology: A Philosophical Introduction*. London & New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017.

Roberto Casati and Achille C. Varzi. *Parts and Places: The Structures of Spatial Representation*. Cambridge & London: MIT Press, 1999.

A.J. Cotnoir and Achille C. Varzi. *Mereology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021.

Edward Casey. *Earth-mapping*. 2005.

Jeff Malpas. *Place and Experience*. 2018.

John G. Stell. "Mereotopology and Computational Representations of the Body." *Computational Culture: A Journal of Software Studies*, Vol. 6. November 2017.

Renzo et al. *Mathematics 490 – Introduction to Topology*. Colorado State University. Internal notes document interpreting and developing topological theory. Rich source of firsthand intuition from a diverse student body.

Course Requirements:

- 1). Weekly readings, completed *prior* to the assigned week. Discussion lead.
- 2). Weekly precis for each assigned text, limited to 1-4 pages single-spaced, per text.
- 3). Writing-intensive research project; length to be determined in collaboration with instructor, as dependent on the richness of the project — i.e., as long as it needs to be, as co-determined.

Semester Program:

January 23: SEP. IEP. Syllabus Week.

- Review and amend Course Syllabus, Reading List, and Semester Program
- “Alfred North Whitehead.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- “Process Philosophy.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
- “Whitehead, Alfred North.” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

January 30: Intuition, Learning, and Transformation: opening an experiential science.

- Bergson, “Introduction to Metaphysics.”
- Dewey, *Experience and Education*.
- Paul, “Phenomenal Feel as Process.”
- Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*.
- Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*.

February 6: Mereology: parts, parts, and more parts; effete, analytic slats.

- Paul, “Logical Parts.”
- Lando, *Mereology*.
- Cotnoir and Varzi, *Mereology*.

February 13: Topological Spaces [literally, ‘*place-study*’ spaces], Place, and Mapping.

- Renzo et al, *Mathematics 490 – Introduction to Topology*.
- Malpas, *Place and Experience*.
- Casey, *Earth-mapping*.
- From the open interval to topological theory: a qualitative mathematics of perception and being.

February 20: Mereotopology. (What would be a *mereotopography*? Place as mereotopology?)

- Casati and Varzi, *Parts and Places*.
- Stell, “Mereotopology and Computational Representations of the Body.”

February 27. Spinoza’s *Ethics*. Causation, Personhood, Retro-Causality, and Acausal Production.

- Paul, “Aspect Causation.”
- Baruch Spinoza, *Ethics*.
- Retro-causality and Acausal Production: Quantum entanglement; Quantum gravity; Nonlocal production and annihilation; Two-state vector formalism (TSVF); Tachyons.
- Jung, Synchronicity.
- Merleau-Ponty, Perception and the A-Directional Intentionality Structure of the World.

March 6: Bergson. *Matter and Memory*.

March 13: Whitehead. *Process and Reality*. Part I. Catch-up week.

March 20: ——. Part II. Catch-up week.

March 27: ——. Part III.

April 3: ——. Part IV.

April 10: ——. Part V.

April 17: Dewey. *Experience and Nature*.

April 24: de la Bellacasa. *Matters of Care*. Final project proposal due.

May 1: Final project workweek.

May 8: Final project due.