Phenomenology and Art in Neuroscientific Training

Organizer(s)   Naomi Middelmann, Micah Murray

1.5 ECTS

Summary   As scientists, we are trained to collect data, observe, and draw conclusions. Phenomenology refers to observations from a first-person perspective. acknowledging our inter-subjectivity. A phenomenological approach teaches you to observe in an unbiased way before generating a hypothesis. This is often at odds with the third-person perspective taken in neuroscience and medicine. However, even in neuroscience and medicine one must take into account inter-individual differences. There is increasing data showing that artistic training can translate to improvements in developing these observational skills, understanding their importance, and making them applicable in both research and clinical practice.

This course focuses on how phenomenology, enhanced by training in artistic techniques, can contribute to the manner in which neuroscientific research can be undertaken and understood.

Blending discussion of the neuroscientific literature with looking at and discussing art, students will also be involved in artistic production. The moments of artistic production will allow students to hone their observational skills, recognise their biases, and understand the difference between hypothesis and observation. The course is comprised of a balance between theoretical and practical sessions.

Students' "soft skills" will be trained with regard to observational, presentation, and communication skills throughout the course itself. Additionally, the course evaluations will help sharpen student's written expression in English to both scientific and wider audiences alike.

Introductory course; no pre-requirements

Course sessions   Course materials can be found on the moodle, detailed below.

Date	Topic
24-Sep-2021	Course overview and our expectations. Does ignorance have a place in science
1-Oct-2021	Subjectivity of perception and bias in research
8-Oct-2021	Beyond neuroaesthetics and the challenge of artists and neuroscientists collaborating
15-Oct-2021	What an artist actually does - the artist as researcher- what is function of art
5-Nov-2021	What neuroscience tells us about art and the brain. Artistic training for scientists, clinicians, and patients
15-Nov-2021	Art, phenomenology, and perception
22-Nov-2021	Art in practice to develop observational skills and phenomenological description and discussions (in artist studio)

29-Nov-2021	Art in practice to develop observational skills and phenomenological description and discussions (in artist studio)
6-Dec-2021	Art in practice to develop observational skills and phenomenological description and discussions (in artist studio)
10-Dec-2021	student presentations of how a phenomenological standpoint makes them reconsider an artwork

Course location

Mondays/Fridays 14h30-16h30 (Petit Auditoire, DNF, Bugnon 9), with the exception of courses on November 22, November 29, and December 6 that will be held in Naomi Middelmann's studio (rue du Simplon 15, Lausanne).

Evaluation

During the course, students will provide an oral presentation of an artwork based on a phenomenological approach. The written evaluation, due by January 10th 2002 will entail each student choosing a published paper (or alternatively their own manuscript) and editing the Results section to show where and how a phenomenological approach would lead to changes either in the wording and/or presentation. The students will also be required to write a new version of the Discussion section that focuses on the unknowns and open questions rather than the "spin" of the results obtained. That is, the students should return to some of the points made in the chapters from Firestein's book *Ignorance*. Aside from assessing their comprehension of the phenomenological approach, this exercise will help improve students' 'soft' skills, including critical analysis, oral presentation skills, and English writing/editing.

Registration

The course is limited to 20 participants. Register before September 20, 2021 by writing a mail to lndscourses@gmail.com (with your supervisor in copy) and stating the course title as subject.

Course materials

Course readings are stored under:
- go to "https://moodle2.unil.ch"
- log in with your institutional address (unil, chuv, epfl)
- click on "Faculté de Biologie et de Médecine" > "Ecole doctorale / doctoral school" > "Lemanic Neuroscience Doctoral School"
- course materials and papers will be stored under "Phenomenology and Art in Neuroscientific Training"
- please enroll using the password "ArtPheno2021"