

Fall 2019: GPHI 6121
Wittgenstein
New School for Social Research
T 4-5:50pm, 6 E. 16th Street, Rm. 911
Phone: 212-229-5707 ext.

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Pronouns—*typically: she, her, hers*
I am equally fine with they, them, theirs
Off. hrs.: T 12-2 & by appt.

Syllabus

Course description

This is a course on the later philosophy of Wittgenstein. Its initial focus is imparting a solid understanding of the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*. Although it is impossible to evoke the nature of Wittgenstein's later philosophical contributions in a short sentence or two, it is fair to say that he is preoccupied with the nature of logic and language and, further, that, in engaging with these topics later on, he criticizes an enormously influential philosophical image of the nature of our cognitive access to the world—specifically, an image on which a dispassionate and dehumanized standpoint is its touchstone. The sequence of seminar readings and meetings is designed to enable a productive conversation about the persistent relevance of elements of Wittgenstein's thought related to these ideas by introducing the elements in connection with questions of current philosophical and practical interest. The last several times the course was taught, the emphasis was on the bearing of Wittgenstein's thought on issues in—respectively—the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language and social epistemology. This time the emphasis is on the bearing of his thought on issues in moral and social thought.

The seminar addresses challenges of interpreting Wittgenstein's undeniably difficult later philosophical output with an eye to making it possible to answer questions such as the following. Why has its reception been a site of intense controversy? Would it be right to follow in the footsteps of some of Wittgenstein's first readers and take his thought to have a politically conservative bent? Would it instead be more appropriate to treat the later philosophy of Wittgenstein as shedding helpful light on radical or liberating social thought?

Learning Outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to: (1) Demonstrate a graduate-level mastery of some of Wittgenstein's signature philosophical contributions in *The Philosophical Investigations* and (2) in *On Certainty* and (3) connect them with contemporary discussions in moral and social thought; (4) Demonstrate the ability to write a thoughtful, graduate-level paper on relevant exegetical and philosophical issues; (5) Demonstrate a verbal ability to assess and produce textually well-grounded criticisms of commentaries on relevant parts of Wittgenstein's later writings; and (6) Demonstrate the ability to, at a graduate level, whether orally or in writing, explain and defend your own preferred interpretations of passages from relevant parts of Wittgenstein's later writings.

Required texts and other resources

You should purchase both *The Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*, preferably in bilingual German-English editions. Readings through Week 3 will be made available to you on Canvas, giving you time to purchase a bilingual copy.

All other required and recommended course readings will be made available on our class Canvas site (under “modules”), or will be made available to you if you contact the instructor. If you are an *official* auditor in this class, you will have access to our course Canvas site. If you are an *unofficial* auditor, you will not have access to it. It should be possible to give unofficial auditors electronic access to course materials. If this is your situation, we can discuss arrangements after our first course meeting.

Course requirements

All enrolled students must:

- do one (no longer than) 7-10 minute seminar presentation, and
- write one (no longer than) 15-18 page seminar paper,

Your seminar paper which will be due on our last day of class, Tuesday, December 3rd. There will be no penalty for late papers, but, if your paper is late, you will have no guarantee of having it read, commented on, graded and returned to you quickly.

Seminar presentations are not graded. They are intended to help shape an inclusive seminar conversation, and they are also intended to give you the opportunity to get early feedback on a topic you would like to explore. For that reason, you will be encouraged to choose a presentation topic that aligns with your envisioned writing topic, though this is not a requirement. (It often happens that students’ ideas about what they want to work on change during the course of the semester. This is to be expected, and, when it happens, it is not a problem.) Toward the end of semester, I will encourage each of you to meet with me about your proposed paper project. I will also encourage you to submit brief, one paragraph-long abstracts. If you do submit an abstract, I will give you feedback on it.

Contacting me

My contact information is at the top of the first page of this syllabus. My regular office hours are in my office, room 1115 at 6 East 16th St. (11th floor), Tuesday 12-2. You can sign up for an appointment with me through Starfish. If my regular time is impossible for you, I can make an arrangement to meet—or phone or skype—at a time that works. You should feel free to email me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. I am on email regularly and will respond quickly to logistical as well as smaller substantive queries. I will ordinarily schedule appointments to discuss larger issues, especially those having to do with involved philosophical questions. Email is the best way to reach me.

On fairness and the methods of this course

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, and that it puts members of underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do anonymous assessment. This is not possible in a relatively small class in which I will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. A second recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students

(e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, I will monitor my own practice with an eye to being fair to all. A third strategy is to get anonymous feedback on pedagogy and methods well before the end of the course, and I will arrange for an anonymous survey around midterm with an eye to making improvements in the running of the course.

Grading disputes

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of your work, I urge you to let me know. I am open to discussion and happy to re-read papers. I am also happy to read drafts, if you have them ready at least a week before the end of term.

Course policies

This course will adhere to New School academic policies. These include the following:

1. Policy on attendance and lateness
 - * Absences may justify some grade reduction and a total of four unexcused absences mandate a reduction of one letter grade for the course.
 - * More than four absences mandate a failing grade for the course, unless there are extenuating circumstances, such as the following:
 - an extended illness requiring hospitalization or visit to a physician (with documentation)
 - a family emergency, e.g. serious illness (with written explanation)
 - observance of a religious holiday

The attendance and lateness policies are enforced as of the first day of classes for all registered students. If registered during the first week of the add/drop period, the student is responsible for any missed assignments and coursework.

For significant lateness, the instructor may consider the tardiness as an absence for the day. Students failing a course due to attendance should consult with an academic advisor to discuss options.

2. Policy on academic honesty and integrity. For details, you should go to the list of New School policies here <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591> and click on the link for “Academic Honesty and Integrity”.
3. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism, which you can find and click on by following the same link (i.e., <https://www.newschool.edu/Components/Wireframes/TwoColumnWireframe.aspx?pageid=591>). Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings,

student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, pages 26-29.

Academic resources for students

Important resources include the *Learning Center* (66 West 12th Street, 6th floor) and the office for *Student Disability Services*. In keeping with the university’s policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with the office staff privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to your instructors. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 63 Fifth Avenue, room 425. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <https://www.newschool.edu/student-disability-services/>, and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

Comment on course readings

The list of readings (below) is relatively heavy, especially when recommended texts are included. As we proceed, I will make suggestions about where to focus attention. I will identify *an easily manageable required reading or set of readings* before every class meeting. This will be in part responsive to how our course discussion is progressing, and I may well adjust or alter the required readings listed below. The recommended readings for each week represent further resources for anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply. You should feel free to contact me with any questions about the course requirements or materials.

Tentative schedule of classes and assignments

Week 1 (Tuesday, August 27th) Introduction with reference to themes from the *Tractatus*

Reading:

No required reading. But you might eventually look back at Wittgenstein’s “Preface” to the *Philosophical Investigations*

Other resources:

G.E.M. Anscombe, “Introduction” and “Elementary Propositions” in *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus*

James Conant and Cora Diamond, “On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely”

Alice Crary, “Introduction” to *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life: Essays in Honor of Cora Diamond*

Cora Diamond, “Throwing Away the Ladder”

PMS Hacker, “Was He Trying to Whistle It?”
 Mounce, “Fact and Thing” and “The Later View” in *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus: An Introduction*
 Peter Winch, “The Unity of Wittgenstein’s Philosophy”

Week 2 (Tuesday September 3rd): The opening of the *Investigations*

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 1-32 and 65-67
 Warren Goldfarb, “I Want You to Bring me a Slab”

Other resources:

Gordon Baker and PMS Hacker, “The Augustinian Conception of Language” and “Family Resemblance” in *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning*, 2nd ed., vol.1
 Douglas Birsch and Jon Dorbolo, “Working With Wittgenstein’s Builders”
 Stanley Cavell, *Philosophical Passages*, “Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of the *Investigations*”
 Norman Malcolm, “Language Game (2)” in *Wittgensteinian Themes*
 Rush Rhees, “Wittgenstein’s Builders” in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*
 Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 33-64 and 68-85

Week 3 (Tuesday, September 10th): A distinctive conception of philosophical method

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 89-133 and “The Big Typescript”
 Stanley Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy” in *Must We Mean What We Say?*

Other resources:

Stanley Cavell, “The *Investigations*’ Everyday Aesthetics of Itself”
 Cora Diamond, “Riddles and Anselm’s Riddle” and “The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy”
 Oskari Kuusela, “Wittgenstein on Philosophical Problems: From One Fundamental Problem to Particular Problems” and “Wittgenstein’s Conception of Philosophy, Everyday Language and Ethics”
 Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and The Philosophical Investigations*, Chapter 1
 Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, Part I, sections 20-23
 Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 86-88 and 134-142

Week 4 (Tuesday, September 17th): Rule-following

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 143-202

Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Meaning and Rules*, “Introductory” and “The Wittgensteinian Paradox”

John McDowell, “Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy”

Other resources:

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, “Criteria and Judgment” and “Natural and Conventional”

Cora Diamond, “Rules: Looking in the Right Place” and “Criss-Cross Philosophy”

Martin Kusch, *A Sceptical Guide to Meaning and Rules*, Chapters 1 and 2

Norman Malcolm, *Nothing is Hidden*, Chapter 9

Week 5 (Tuesday, September 24th): Rules, reason and language

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 203-220 and 499-500

Stanley Cavell, “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language”

Other resources:

Avner Baz, *When Words are Called for*, “Contextualism and the Burden of Knowledge” and “Contextualism, Anti-Contextualism and Knowing as Being in a Position to Give Assurance”

Stanley Cavell, “Knowing and Acknowledging”

John McDowell, “Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following”

Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, Part I, sections 33-35

Charles Travis, “Pragmatism” and *The Uses of Sense*, “Doubt and Knowledge Ascription”

Week 6 (Tuesday, October 1st): Privacy

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 243-270

John McDowell, “One Strand in the Private Language Argument”

Other resources:

Stanley Cavell, *Claim of Reason*, “Between Avoidance and Acknowledgment,” pp.329-354

Cora Diamond, “Does Bismarck Have a Beetle in His Box?”

PMS Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, Chapters 10-11

Stephen Mulhall, *Wittgenstein’s Private Language*, Chapters 1 and 4

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 221-242

Week 7 (Tuesday, October 8th): Inner and outer

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 271-315, 536-537 and Part II sections i-iii, v-x and xii-xiv

Other resources:

Stanley Cavell, "Between Avoidance and Acknowledgment," pp.370-383, in *The Claim of Reason*

Alice Crary, "The Moral Dimension of Mind: Philosophy of Psychology as a Guide to Ethics" in *Inside Ethics*

Ian Hacking, "Humans, Aliens and Autism"

Norman Malcolm, "Behaviorism as a Philosophy of Psychology"

Wittgenstein, *Lectures on Philosophical Psychology, 1946-1947*, sections 281- 282 and *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, sections 448-450

Note: *This week would be a reasonable time to finish reading Part I of Wittgenstein's Investigations*

Week 8 (Tuesday, October 15th): Seeing-as

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 398-402 and Part II, sections iv and xi

Other resources:

Avner Baz, "On Learning from Wittgenstein, or What Does it Take to *See* the Grammar of Seeing Aspects?" and Stephen Mulhall, "The Work of Wittgenstein's Words: A Reply to Baz"

Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and The Philosophical Investigations*, Chapter 6

Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, Part I, sections 42-50

P.F. Strawson, "Imagination and Perception" in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*

Week 9 (Tuesday, October 22nd): Excursus on how to understand the concept of objectivity

Reading:

Alice Crary, "Objectivity" in James Conant and Sebastian Greves, *Wittgenstein: Basic Concepts*

Thomas Nagel, "Subjective and Objective," in *Mortal Questions*

Other resources:

Sophie Grace Chapell, "The Objectivity of Ordinary Life"

Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, "Introduction" and "Epistemologies of the Eye" in *Objectivity*
 Benjamin de Mesel, "Wittgenstein and Objectivity in Ethics"
 John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason" and "Toward Rehabilitating Objectivity"
 David Wiggins, "A Sensible Subjectivism," in *Needs, Values Truth*
 Bernard Williams, *Descartes: the Project of Pure Inquiry*, Chapter 9
 Bernard Williams, *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Chapter 8

Week 10 (Tuesday, October 29th): The staging of *On Certainty*

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 1-25
 G.E. Moore, "A Defense of Common Sense" and "Proof of an External World"

Other resources:

Annalisa Coliva, "G.E. Moore: Skepticism, Certainty and Commonsense" in *Moore and Wittgenstein*
 Norman Malcolm, "The Groundlessness of Religious Belief"
 Marie McGinn, Chapter 1 of *Sense and Certainty*

Week 11 (Tuesday, November 5th): Competing approaches to *On Certainty*

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 26-250
 James Conant, "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use"
 Alice Crary, "Ethics, Inheriting from Wittgenstein," Chapter 3 of *Beyond Moral Judgment*

Other resources:

Annalisa Coliva, "Wittgenstein: Belief, Knowledge and Certainty" in *Moore and Wittgenstein*
 Martin Kusch, "Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* and Relativism"
 Michael Williams, "Introduction" and "The Appeal to the Given" in *Groundless Belief*

Week 12 (Tuesday, November 12th): Wittgenstein and the nature and difficulty of moral thought

Reading:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 251-450
 Iris Murdoch, "On Vision and Choice in Morality" in *Existentialists and Mystics*

Other resources:

Alice Crary, "Extending the Argument," Chapter 6 of *Inside Ethics*
 Cora Diamond, "Anything but Argument?" and "The Difficulty of Philosophy and the Difficulty of Reality"
 Stephen Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal*, Chapter 1
 Onora O'Neill, "The Power of Example"

Week 13 (Tuesday, November 19th): Wittgenstein and social criticismReading:

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 451-676
 Wittgenstein, "Frazer's *Golden Bough*," selections
 Alice Crary, "The Methodological is Political"
 Charles Mills, "Alternative Epistemologies"

Other resources:

Linda Martín Alcoff, "Epistemologies of Ignorance" and "Epistemic Identities"
 Lorraine Code, "Taking Subjectivity into Account"
 Alice Crary, "What do Feminists Want in an Epistemology?"
 Alvin Goldman, "Why Social Epistemology is Real Epistemology"
 Nancy Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint: Developing the Ground for a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism"
 Charles Mills, "Ideology"
There are huge literatures, within feminist theory, critical race theory and Marxist theory, on the critical need for situated knowledge. For some overviews, see the Mills, "Alternative Epistemologies" and Crary, "The Methodological is Political"

Week 14 (Tuesday, November 26th): Wittgenstein and Critical TheoryReading:

Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, selections
 Alice Crary, "Wittgenstein Does Critical Theory"

Other resources:

Jay Bernstein, "Instrumental Reason"
 Alice Crary, "Wittgenstein's Philosophy in Relation to Political Thought," in Crary and Read, eds., *The New Wittgenstein*
 Alice Crary and Joel de Lara, "Who's Afraid of Ordinary Language Philosophy?"
 Ernst Gellner, *Words and Things: A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study of Ideology*, Chapter 1
 Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*, Chapter 7
 David Owen, "Genealogy and Critical Theory," in *The European Journal of Philosophy*
 Nigel Pleasants, "Toward a Critical Use of Marx and Wittgenstein," Chapter 9 of Kitching and Pleasants, eds., *Marx and Wittgenstein*

Week 15 (Tuesday, December 3rd): General reflections, conclusions

Course reception and concluding discussion.

Papers due before or in class today.