PHIL10014: The Philosophy of Wittgenstein 2018/19 Course Guide

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1. Course Aims and Objectives

We will consider the philosophical work of Ludwig Wittgenstein in this course, focusing especially on the period from his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* to his *Philosophical Investigations*. Apart from the details of Wittgenstein's philosophical positions in these two works, we will consider the continuity of his philosophy and his views on ethics.

We will not be discussing any of Wittgenstein’s works after the *Philosophical Investigations*, including *On Certainty* nor his several remarks and writings on the philosophy of psychology.

2. Intended Learning Outcomes

- to grasp and analyze central themes in Wittgenstein’s philosophy
- to identify and articulate problems in the interpretation of Wittgenstein’s work
- to assess Wittgenstein’s reasons for the views he advocates
- to grasp the nature of Wittgenstein’s methodology in his work
- to relate Wittgenstein’s philosophy to that of historical and contemporary philosophers

3. Seminar Times and Locations

Semester 1, Tuesdays 2.10pm – 4pm, David Hume Tower, room 1.20

4. Seminar Content

Requirements
You will need to have ready access to the following two texts to participate in the seminars for this course. Each will be abbreviated TLP and PI, respectively.

☞ You should bring a copy to each seminar.

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London: Routledge, various editions). N.B. Two translations are available from Routledge, one by Ogden and one by Pears & McGuinness; either will suffice though I prefer Ogden.


The schedule for the seminars follows and includes questions for essays and
discussion. Seminar-specific reading and supplemental reading for essays are in the Readings section below.

The format for the meetings of this course is a seminar format and it will not be possible for you to succeed in your studies without reading the materials suggested for each seminar.

☞ You should come to each seminar having read at least the materials listed as ‘Sources’ for each week.

☞ A list of general Wittgenstein reading is given at the end of the Readings section.

Regrettably, the behaviour of some obliges me to make the following requests.

☞ Please do not text or send instant messages during class. It is disrespectful. Turn off the ringer of your phone and put the phone away.

☞ Please do not use your laptop computers in class for anything besides making notes or related activity. If I notice that you are using your laptop for something potentially distracting to your neighbours such as Facebook or YouTube, I will ask you to close your laptop. Tweeting is not a related activity no matter how interesting the seminar material. You distract others with these activities, which is not thoughtful.

1. Introduction
Sources: No advance reading required.

Discussion:
Wittgenstein’s life and work; Wittgenstein’s conception of philosophy; logic in the Tractatus; Frege; the Augustinian picture of language; the project of the Tractatus, the picture theory in the Tractatus.

Useful reading: TLP 2.1 - 3.3, 4 - 4.121, 6.53 - 7; PI §§1 - 7.

2. Tractatus
Sources: TLP 2-4.
See also: http://tractatus.lib.uiowa.edu/tp/

Discussion:
For this seminar, I would like everyone to make notes on the two top levels of comments in TLP from sections 2, 3 and 4, viz. §§ 2, 2.1, 2.2…3, 3.1, 3.2, etc. We are going to read and discuss these central sections in class.

Questions:
To what extent, if any, are the pictures of the picture-theory like pictures from a camera? According to Wittgenstein, do we learn the meanings of words? Is his account adequate? What is the result of incorrectly combining signs? Is the result intelligible? What is the difference between a sign and a symbol? Is the distinction clear? What is the role of the proposition in the Tractatus?

3. Ethics and Nonsense
Sources: TLP Preface, 5.5ff & 6.4-7; “A Lecture on Ethics” (sources in Reading below)
Secondary: Notebooks 1914-16, entries from June 1916 to January 1917.

Questions:
Does Wittgenstein believe there is anything of value? [Do not use as essay question.]
Why is ethics nonsense according to Wittgenstein? Is he right?
To what extent, if any, are logic and value related?
Is the whole of the Tractatus really nonsense by Wittgenstein’s lights?
Is there a difference between senseless and nonsensical statement? If so, what is it?
Was Wittgenstein a solipsist?

4. Analysis and Philosophical Method
Sources: TLP 3.2-4.0311, 4.111-4.121, PI 46-64, 89-91, 109-133.

Questions:
Why does Wittgenstein think that sense must be determinate?
Is it an objection to TLP that no examples of simple objects are given?
Does it make sense to talk about the analysis of a proposition?
Is it true that what is known and understood is complex?
Is there such a thing as philosophical method?
What contrasts are there between psychology and philosophy?
Does every method of analysis have an endpoint when the analysis is complete?
Must there be an overarching method of analysis applicable to anything?

5. Language-games, Ostensive Definition, Meaning as Use
Sources: PI §§ 1-88

Questions:
What is a language-game? What roles do language-games play? [Do not use for essays.]
How do language-games differ from pictures? Are language-games games?
To what extent, if any, is language a multiplicity of language-games?
Could the builders' language-game be a complete language?
Does ostensive definition connect language with the world?
Is meaning identical with use?
What are family resemblance concepts?

6. Rule-following I

During this seminar we will make a close reading of the sections above and consider their meaning. I would like each of you to read the above sections and make a commentary on each.

7. Rule-following II
Sources: PI §§ 138-242.
(Oxford; Blackwell, 1978), Part VI.

Does Wittgenstein establish that language is rule-governed?
Does a rule show me what I should do next? If so, how?
In what sense is following a rule a practice?
Can Wittgenstein's account of rules explain logical necessity?
Can there be socially isolated rule-following?
Can there be private rule-following?

8. Private Language I
Sources: PI §§ 202, 237, 243-244, 246, 248, 253, 258-9, 265, 270, 272, 291, 293, 296-299, 304.

During this seminar we will make a close reading of the sections above and consider their meaning. I would like each of you to read the above sections and make a commentary on each.

9. Private Language II
Sources: PI §§ 237-293

What is a private language supposed to be? Are there any?
In what sense are my sensations private?
What is the purpose of Wittgenstein’s discussion of a private language?
How does the discussion of private language relate to the discussion of rule-following?
What role does scepticism about memory play in the discussion of private language?
Does Wittgenstein's discussion depend on verificationist principles?
Is Wittgenstein’s private language argument about language or sensations?

10. Psychology: Inner and Outer
Secondary: PI 244-315

What is misleading about the idea we have of the relation between mind and body that leads into philosophical difficulties?
Can an argument from criteria refute skepticism about other minds?
In what sense, if any, do we have epistemic privacy?
Does Wittgenstein deny the existence of 'inner processes'?
Is Wittgenstein a behaviourist or a dualist?
What is it to describe, rather than avow, a state of mind?

11. Naturalism, Necessity and the Grammar of Forms of Life
Sources: PI 490-570 esp. 491-497, Part II.xii (4th ed. PPF §§365-367)

What does Wittgenstein think determines the bounds of sense?
What is the difference, if any, between ordinary grammar and logical grammar?
What contrasts are there between psychology and philosophy? How do these relate to forms of life?
Does language have a goal in the same way as cookery?
To what extent, if any, must language track the world?

5. Readings

1. Introduction
Background to Logic and Language
Morris, Michael, An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language, (Cambridge University Press 2006), esp. chapter 15
Textor, Mark, Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Frege on Sense and Reference, (Routledge 2009).

Biographical and Philosophical Introductions
Janik, A. & Toulmin, S., Wittgenstein’s Vienna, various publishers 1973 and
1996


Kenny, Anthony. *Wittgenstein* (Harmondsworth; Penguin, 1973); chap. 1


**Guidebooks for TLP**

Any of these below is good. Anscombe’s is dated but goes into the Russell/Frege background very well. Mounce’s is my favorite, but it can be terse. White’s is tricky but unusually insightful. Nordmann and Morris are the most recent and reflect recent scholarship. Schroeder’s is helpful in that it is useful for both the *Tractatus* and the *Investigations*—but it is somewhat dense. Child’s also covers both well, and the treatment of the *Investigations* is close to the spirit of my discussion in the course.


Anscombe, G.E.M., *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, (St. Augustine’s Press, 2001) and several earlier editions


**Further into TLP**

Hacker, P.M.S., “How The Tractatus Was Meant To Be Read,” *Philosophical...*


**Black**, Max. *A Companion to Wittgenstein's "Tractatus"*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1964 [This is useful for any close reader of the Tractatus as it goes section by section.]


**Guidebooks for PI**


**Ahmed**, A. Wittgenstein's “Philosophical Investigations” (Continuum, 2010).


**Hacker**, P. M. S. and G. Baker, *An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations* (Oxford; Blackwell, 1980-1996; second editions too), four vols. [This is overkill as a guidebook and should probably only be consulted for essays.]


2. Tractatus
As for the previous seminar #1, especially the two subsections on TLP.

Essays in this area will need to use resources from ‘Further into TLP’ above and probably at least one guidebook that covers TLP.

3. Ethics and Nonsense

*Wittgenstein’s Writing on or about ethics*

and E. V. DiLascio. Blackwell, 2014. The most up to date version of the Lecture on Ethics, includes my introduction to the lecture and Wittgenstein's view of ethics.


Commentary on the application of Wittgenstein to ethics


Shields, Philip R. *Logic and Sin in the Writings of Ludwig Wittgenstein*. 


*Articles about nonsense in TLP*


### 4. Analysis and Philosophical Method

**Morris, Michael,** *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language,* (Cambridge University Press 2006), chapters 2 and 3.


**Anscombe, G.E.M.,** *An Introduction to Wittgenstein’s Tractatus,* (St. Augustine’s Press, 2001) and several earlier editions.

**Cavell, Stanley,** ‘The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy,’ in *Cavell, Must We Mean What We Say?* (Cambridge University Press, 1976).


**Mounce, H.O.,** ‘The Logical System of the Tractatus,’ in *Glock, Hans-Johann.*
5. Language-games, Ostensive Definition, Meaning as Use

Introductions to these topics


Lugg, A. *Wittgenstein’s Investigations 1-133* (Routledge, 2000), pp. 8-90


McGinn, Marie. *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (Routledge, 1997), Chap. 2


Articles


6. Rule-following I

7. Rule-following II
Wright, C. and A. Miller (eds.), *Rule-Following and Meaning*, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002. [This has many articles on the topic that were published elsewhere.]
Budd, Malcolm. 'Wittgenstein on Meaning, Interpretation and Rules,' *Synthese* 1984; see also Budd, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* (London; Routledge, 1989), Chap. 2.
Williams, M. 'Rules, Community and Individual,' in *Wittgenstein, Meaning and Mind* (Routledge, 1999), Chap. 6; originally in Klaus Puhl, ed., *Meaning-Scepticism*
Whiting, Daniel, "Is Meaning Fraught with Ought", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 90 (2009), pp. 535-55


8. Private Language I

9. Private Language II


Budd, Malcolm. 'Wittgenstein on Sensuous Experiences,' *Philosophical Quarterly*, 1986; see also Budd, *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology* (London; Routledge, 1989), Chap. 3.


Most guidebooks have a chapter on the private language argument.

10. Psychology: Inner and Outer

Descartes, *Meditations* V [for contrast]


Wittgenstein, L., Last Writings on the Philosophy of Psychology: The Inner
and the Outer, 1949 - 1951, volume 2, Blackwell, 1993. [This was published much later and, while very rich, it is rough and much ignored in secondary commentary.]

Malcolm, N. Nothing is Hidden, Chap 8.
Williams, M. 'Wittgenstein's Rejection of Scientific Psychology,' in Wittgenstein, Meaning and Mind (Routledge, 1999), Chap. 9.

11. Naturalism, Necessity and the Grammar of Forms of Life
Schroeder, pp. 151-168.
Stern and Sluga, chapters 6, 11 and 12.
Glock (Reader), chapter 14.
Hacker, P. An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations, vol 4. part I, chapter 3 and part II.

Secondary Reading List
The following items are additional resources on which you can draw in your studies. This reading list is by no means exhaustive of philosophical literature on Wittgenstein.

General Commentaries on Wittgenstein’s Philosophy
Fogelin, R. F. Wittgenstein (London; Routledge, 1987).


*Collections of Essays*


6. Assessment Information

**Exam**

This course will be assessed solely on the basis of an exam given in the December diet of examinations. Students who qualify (usually fourth year single honours philosophy students) may be obliged to submit a coursework dissertation instead of sitting the exam. The title of your coursework dissertation must be approved in advance by submitting it to me in person or by email. After your title is approved you will complete a form confirming this title and submit it to the departmental office. Generally, any question listed for discussion in a seminar is a suitable short dissertation title.

**Formative Exam**

In addition, everyone should submit up to two exam answers from last year’s exam--available from the Library online. These can be e-mailed to me at any point during the term. This “formative exam” will not count toward determining your mark for this class or the class of degree you are ultimately awarded. However the formative exam is an excellent opportunity to improve your philosophical writing and try arguments you may ultimately use in the exam or
short dissertation. I strongly urge you to submit two formative exam essays. If you submit your essays by the end of teaching week 9, I will return them to you in class in teaching week 11. If you submit the essay by the end of teaching week 11, I will return the essay to you via the philosophy office in week 1 of the second term.

**MSc Assessment**

MSc students are assessed by a single essay of 2500 words that must be submitted to the postgraduate teaching office in December at the same time as other MSc Essays. Please check with the postgraduate teaching office for precise details. Generally, any question listed for discussion in a seminar is a suitable essay question.

**Feedback will be provided within 3 weeks, unless otherwise notified by email.**

### 7. Useful Information

**Contacts**

You may contact me by email at david.levy@ed.ac.uk. My office is in room 5.10 of the Dugald Stewart Building. I am available Tuesday of each week from 4.10 until 5.10pm to discuss more or less any philosophical topic, related to this course or not. To ensure that I can see you, I ask that you send me an email confirming that you intend to visit and advising me of the topic for discussion. Unfortunately, I am not often available at other times, though you can seek a special arrangement to meet if it proves necessary.

**Feedback**

You will receive feedback on your work in this class in the following ways. First, you can see me during my office hour to talk about class material, your own contributions to class discussions or essays in progress. Second, I will mark your formative exam and provide comments on how you can improve your essay—in technique and content—in advance of the exam. Third, you will get some feedback on your exam essays. Fourth, you can email me with specific questions about your work in progress or our discussions during the seminars.