

The Later Philosophy of Wittgenstein

Syllabus

Course Description

This course will have four foci: 1) a close reading of the verba ipsissima of *Philosophical Investigations* and a handful of closely related writings by Wittgenstein; 2) an overview of the history of the reception of the book and some of the most influential readings it has occasioned; 3) a discussion of a handful of recent debates in the secondary literature on some its most contested sequences of sections – including those on ostensive definition, the critique of Wittgenstein’s early work, the nature of philosophy, rule-following, practices/forms of life, the so-called private language argument, the nature of first-person authority, and the relations between meaning and use, inner and outer, criteria and mental states, sensations and discursive forms of mindedness; 4) an assessment of how best to interpret the overall aims, methods, and teachings that confer unity on the work as a whole, with special attention to the conception of philosophy at work in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Throughout the course, we will seek to evaluate some of the most influential options put forward in the secondary literature regarding how to read the book, with a special focus on various aspects of the controversy surrounding so-called “quietest” and “anti-quietest” interpretations of the aims and methods of the work. Readings will include texts by Albritton, Anscombe, Baker, Cavell, Cook, Diamond, Geach, Goldfarb, Hacker, Kripke, Malcolm, McDowell, Pears, Stroud, and Wright.

Instructors

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Required Texts and Readings

The Primary Required Text(s)

Wittgenstein died in 1951; *Philosophical Investigations* was posthumously published in 1953, after having been meticulously edited by Elizabeth Anscombe and Rush Rhees, in what remains the most famous and influential translation by Anscombe. For many, the cadence of Wittgenstein's later philosophical voice is inextricably intertwined with Anscombe's elegant renderings of his remarks. That translation was subsequently republished in two further editions – the first of which (in 1958) contained some minor corrections of the translation. The fame of her translation is no mere accident of history; Anscombe achieved an extraordinary degree of success in capturing the simplicity and elegance of Wittgenstein's original German. As she strove to capture the spirit of his remarks, sometimes at the cost of the letter, there was an inevitable and gradually increasing degree of grumbling over the precise accuracy of her rendering of the original German. This led to calls for a revised translation. Peter Hacker and Joachim Schulte undertook the massive project of bringing out an extensively revised version of her translation (taking many criticisms of her version into account in the process). This new English edition of the work was long awaited and finally appeared in 2009 as the facing-page *Revised Fourth Edition* of the work (for which the translators are now listed as Anscombe, Hacker, and Schulte); it is the English-language version that you will now find, if you look for this work in a bookstore (Oxford: Blackwell: 2009). It officially put the earlier classic Anscombe translation out of print. Hacker and Schulte strive in their translation to capture every nuance of the German less than fully registered in Anscombe's translation. It is thus, with some exceptions, generally more literal and stricter about translating the same word or turn of phrase from the German in the same manner into English each time it recurs in the text. It also strives to respect numerous aspects of the structure and punctuation of Wittgenstein's sentences not preserved in Anscombe's comparatively free-handed effort to achieve a maximally idiomatic and fluent English text. This inevitably has the result that the Hacker/Schulte edition contains English sentences with a relatively stilted, sometimes discernibly Teutonic phraseology, syntax, and punctuation. We will employ both translations in class, taking advantage of their respective strengths and weaknesses. You may use either, but we recommend both. Though we will occasionally focus on the merits of a particular translation, no reading knowledge of German is required.

Secondary Readings

The rest of the readings will be available through the seminar's Chalk website. The readings for each week divide into required readings and background reading. Students taking the course for credit are expected to do the all of required reading. The background readings are optional.

Structure of the Course, Requirements and Related Issues

Meeting Times: The course will meet all eleven of the eleven weeks of the spring quarter on Wednesdays from 3:00 to 6:00pm in Harper 150.

Undergraduates: This is a graduate course. It is open only to a handful of exceptional undergraduates who have the appropriate background in philosophy and have secured prior permission to take the course for credit.

Policy on Auditors: Any graduate student with a serious interest in the topic is welcome to audit the seminar.

Announcements: There is a Chalk website for this course (chalk.uchicago.edu). Announcements (modifications to the syllabus, etc.) will periodically be posted there. Students are expected to keep abreast of these. Additional readings will also be assigned that are not presently on the syllabus and those readings will be made available through the Chalk site.

Final paper: Students taking the course for credit are expected write a term paper at the end of the quarter, due on the Friday of 11th week. Final papers that are received by the instructors in a timely fashion will be graded immediately. The final paper is the only official requirement for the course. It may be on any topic of your choice pertaining to themes covered in the seminar.

Policy on extensions for the final paper: Undergraduate and M.A. papers must be handed in on time. Ph.D. students may hand in their final papers after the official due date and still receive credit for the course only if they have secured permission from the professors to do so. Any student granted an extension should also be aware of the following: such papers will not be graded immediately upon receipt. The later the paper, the less promptly it will be graded.

Schedule of Meetings, Topics and Reading Assignments

First Meeting (Wednesday, Apr. 1): The Opening of the *Investigations*

Topics to be covered in the first meeting:

- Overview of the structure of the course
- Survey of themes to be covered
- Explanation of the approach to be taken to the assigned materials
- Their relation to the *Tractatus*
- The Preface to the *Investigations*
- Sections 1 & 2
- **Note:** No assigned reading for the first meeting.

Second Meeting (Wednesday, Apr. 8): Critique of Augustinian Theories of Language

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§3-43
Goldfarb, "I Want You to Bring Me a Slab"

Background reading:

Baker and Hacker, "The Augustinian Picture"
Cavell, "Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of Wittgenstein's *Investigations*", pp. 261-295

Third Meeting (Wednesday, April 15): The Critique of the *Tractatus*

Required readings:

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, excerpts
Philosophical Investigations, §§44-88
Goldfarb, "Wittgenstein on Fixity of Meaning"

Background reading:

Bambrough, "Universals and Family Resemblances"

Fourth Meeting (Wednesday, Apr. 22): Wittgenstein's Later Conception of Philosophy, I

Required readings:

Tractatus, Preface, §§4.111- 4.1121, 5.5563, 6.53 – 7
Philosophical Investigations, §§89-107
Diamond, "Criss-Cross Philosophy"

Background readings:

Baker and Hacker, "Commentary on 89 – 133"
Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy"
Kuusela, "From Metaphysics and Philosophical Theses to Grammar"

Fifth Meeting (Wednesday, Apr. 29): Wittgenstein's Later Conception of Philosophy, II

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§108-133
Big Typescript, Chapter on Philosophy
Diamond, "What Nonsense Might Be"
Conant, "Wittgenstein's Methods"

Background readings:

Joachim Schulte, "Wittgenstein's Method"
Wyss, "Does Wittgenstein Have a Method?"
Conant, "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use"

Sixth Meeting (Wednesday, May 6): Introduction to the Elucidation of Mental States

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§134-184
Goldfarb, "Wittgenstein on Understanding"
McDowell, "Are Meaning, Understanding, etc., Definite States?"

Background readings:

Browne, "Wittgenstein on Reading"

Seventh Meeting (Wednesday, May. 13): Rule-Following

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§185-201
Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2
McDowell, “Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy”
Finkelstein, “Wittgenstein on Rules and Platonism”

Background readings:

Wright, “Wittgenstein’s Rule-Following Considerations”
Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, excerpt
McDowell, “How Not to Read *Philosophical Investigations*: Brandom’s Wittgenstein”
Conant, “Quietism?”, in “On Wittgenstein’s Philosophy of Mathematics”

Eighth Meeting (Wednesday, May 20): Practices and Forms of Life

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§202-242
Remarks on the Foundations of the Mathematics, excerpt
Haase, “The Laws of Thought and the Power of Thinking”

Background readings:

Stroud, “Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity”
Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, excerpts
Cerbone, “How to Do Things with Wood”

Ninth Meeting (Wednesday, May 27): Sensations, Privacy and Private Language, I

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§243-281
Finkelstein, “Wittgenstein’s ‘Plan for the Treatment of Psychological Concepts’”
Stroud, “Wittgenstein’s ‘Treatment’ of the Quest for ‘a language which describes my inner experiences and which only I myself can understand’”
Cook, “Human Beings”

Background reading:

Zettel, excerpts
Stroud, “Private Objects, Physical Objects, and Ostention”
McDowell, “Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge”

Tenth Meeting (Wednesday, June 3): Sensations, Privacy and Private Language, II

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§282-309, 422-428
Pitcher, *Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, excerpt
Cook, "Wittgenstein on Privacy"
Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, excerpts

Background readings:

Albritton, "On Wittgenstein's Use of the Term 'Criterion'"
Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*"
McDowell, "Intentionality and Interiority in Wittgenstein"

Eleventh Meeting (Wednesday, June 10): The End of *Philosophical Investigations*, Part I

Required readings:

Philosophical Investigations, §§580-587, 633-689
Zettel, excerpts
Child, "Remembering Intentions"

Background readings:

Anscombe, "On the Reality of the Past"