

Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus

Syllabus

Course Description

This course will have four foci: 1) a close reading of the *Tractatus* and related writings by Wittgenstein, 2) a review of the history of the reception of the *Tractatus* in both Austro-German and Anglo-American philosophy, 3) an overview of the most recent debates in the secondary literature on the *Tractatus*, and 4) an assessment of how best to interpret the overall aims, methods, and doctrines of the *Tractatus*. In the early parts of the course, we will selectively review some of the aspects of the work of Frege and Russell required for an understanding of the *Tractatus*. Attention will also be given to the following topics: Wittgenstein's early criticisms of the views of Frege and Russell, the relation between Wittgenstein's pre-*Tractatus* writings and the *Tractatus* itself, and the relation between Wittgenstein's early and later thought. 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 special attention to the controversy surrounding the so-called “resolute” or “austere” reading of the *Tractatus*. Readings will include texts by Frege, Russell, Ramsey, Carnap, Anscombe, Geach, McGuinness, Hacker, Goldfarb, Ricketts, Diamond, Kremer, Sullivan, White, and Floyd.

Instructor

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Graduate Course Assistants

Silver Bronzo: sections 02 & 03
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Amos Browne: sections 01 & 04
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Required Texts and Readings

This course is intended to be as much an introduction to contemporary scholarship on the *Tractatus* as to the *Tractatus* itself. The current literature on the subject is massive, and students taking the course for credit will be expected to orient themselves in it, and thus to read beyond the merely required readings for the course. Nonetheless, we must begin somewhere. The following seven texts have been ordered for the course and are available at the Seminary Co-op:

1. G. E. M Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*
2. Michael Beany, ed., *The Frege Reader*
3. Cora Diamond, *The Realistic*
4. H. O. Mounce, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus: An Introduction*
5. Roger M. White, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks: 1914-16*
7. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, translated by C. K. Ogden, bi-lingual edition

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.

The following seven texts have *not* been ordered for the course, but may be of interest to students in the course and are thus worthy of special mention:

1. *The New Wittgenstein*, edited by Alice Crary and Rupert Read
2. *Wittgenstein and the Moral Life*, edited by Alice Crary
3. *From Frege to Wittgenstein*, edited by Erich Reck
4. *Wittgenstein's Lasting Influence*, edited by Max Koelbel and Bernhard Weiss
5. Marie McGinn, *Elucidating the Tractatus*
6. Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense: Readings Wittgenstein's Tractatus*
7. *Beyond the Tractatus Wars*, edited by Rupert Read and Matthew Lavery

The first three of these are in paperback and comparatively affordable; the next three are not; the last is available in paperback, is only a few weeks' old, and is the most recent collection of work on the *Tractatus* to appear. The first one is a good early introduction to the *Tractatus*. The fifth and sixth book above each represent a recent interesting attempt to offer a definitive interpretation in the wake of the scholarly controversies about how to read the text that we will

be exploring in this course. The other five are collections of essays from which, in each case, at least three essays will be assigned for this course (and made available through the Chalk site), while many of the other essays in each of these collections are also relevant to the topics of the course.

Structure of the Course, Requirements and Related Issues

Meeting Times: The course will meet all eleven of the eleven weeks of the quarter on Tuesdays from 3:00 to 6:00pm in Harper 140.

Undergraduates: This course is open only to undergraduates who have the appropriate background in philosophy. Some prior acquaintance with the subject will be assumed.

Undergraduate and M.A. Sections: There are four sections of the course for undergraduates and M.A. students. Two will be taught by Silver Bronzo and two by Amos Browne. Every undergraduate and every M.A. student should have been assigned or have signed up for a section. You may only transfer into an alternative section with permission of the instructor of the section. Weekly attendance of sections is mandatory for undergraduates and optional for M. A. students.

Graduate Section: There will be a graduate discussion section for the course. It will be led by the professor. It is open only to PhD. students. Any Ph.D. student from any department is welcome to attend that section. Attendance is optional. It will meet on Mondays, from 5:00 to 6:00pm in Harper 148.

Policy on Auditors: Anyone with a serious interest in the topic is welcome to audit in 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.

Format: The main meetings of the course will have a lecture format. The sections will have a discussion format.

Work for the course: All undergraduates are expected to attend class regularly, to be conversant with the required readings, to attend sections regularly, and to be ready to participate in discussion in section.

Grade for the course: The undergraduate grade will be based 20% on section participation and 80% on the final paper; the M.A. student and Ph. D. student grade will be based 100% on the final paper.

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 which are received by the instructor 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. Undergraduate papers should be between 12 and 15 pages. All graduate student papers (both M. A. and Ph.D.) should be between 15 and 30 pages. The graduate instructors and the professor will each make announcements about how and in what form they would like to receive the final papers.

Policy on extensions for the final paper: Undergraduate and M.A. papers must be handed in on time to their section instructor. 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 professor 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 (Tuesday, Jan. 3): Introductory Meeting

Topics to be covered in the first meeting:

- Overview of the structure of the course
- Survey of themes to be covered in the course
- Explanation of the approach to be taken to the assigned materials
- Introduction to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*
- Its relation to the work of Frege and Russell
- Review of the intellectual reception of *The Tractatus*
- Explanation of various aspects of the syllabus
- Relation of the discussion sections to the main meetings of the course
- **Note:** No assigned reading for the first meeting.

Second Meeting (Tuesday, Jan. 10): The Russellian Background

Required readings:

Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, §§46-55
Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 12
Bertrand Russell, *Theory of Knowledge*, Part I, Chapter 9 ("Logical Data")
Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Lectures 1 - 3

Background readings:

Bertrand Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, §§481-483
Bertrand Russell, "On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood"
Bertrand Russell, "What is Logic?" [1912]
Peter Hylton, "The Nature of the Proposition and the Revolt Against Idealism"
Peter Hylton, *Russell, Idealism and the Emergence of Analytic Philosophy*, pp. 333-361

Third Meeting (Tuesday, Jan. 17): The Fregean Background

Required readings:

Gottlob Frege, "On Concept and Object"
Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, Preface
Gottlob Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Introduction
Gottlob Frege, *The Basic Laws of Arithmetic*, Introduction, selection

Background reading:

Joan Weiner, *Frege in Perspective*, Chapter 6
Cora Diamond, "Frege and Nonsense"
Cora Diamond, "What Does a *Begriffsschrift* Do?"
Thomas Ricketts, "Objectivity and Objecthood"

Fourth Meeting (Tuesday, Jan. 24): The Structure and Opening of the Tractatus

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, Preface, 1 – 2.225, 6.54 – 7
H.O. Mounce, Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2
Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense*, Chapter 1
Thomas Ricketts, "Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in W's *Tractatus*", sections I - III

Background readings:

Roger White, *Wittgenstein's Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Chapters 1 & 2
Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense*, Chapter 2
Christopher Campbell, "Categorial Indeterminacy, Generality, and Logical Form"
Anthony Palmer, "The Complex Problem and the Theory of Symbolism"

Fifth Meeting (Tuesday, Jan. 31): Wittgenstein's Inheritance of Frege's Philosophy

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 3 – 3.334, 5.473 – 5.4733
Peter Geach, "Saying and Showing in Frege and Wittgenstein",
Cora Diamond, "What Nonsense Might Be"

Background readings:

Thomas Ricketts, "Frege, the Tractatus, and the Logocentric Predicament"
Cora Diamond, "Inheriting from Frege: The Work of Reception, as Wittgenstein Did It"
Hide Ishiguro, "Use and Reference of Names"
Thomas Ricketts, "Wittgenstein against Frege and Russell"

Sixth Meeting (Tuesday, Feb. 7): The Tractarian Conception of Nonsense

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 3.34 – 3.5
Peter Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, 2nd Edition, Chapter 1
Rudolf, Carnap, “On the Elimination of Metaphysics by Means of the Logical Analysis of Language”
Peter Hacker, “Wittgenstein, Carnap, and the New American Wittgensteinians”
Cora Diamond, “Logical Syntax in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”

Background readings:

Hans-Johann Glock, “All Kinds of Nonsense”
Silver Bronzo, “Context, Compositionality, and Nonsense in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”
Edmund Dain, “Contextualism and Nonsense in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”

Seventh Meeting (Tuesday, Feb. 14): The Problem of Chickening Out

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4 – 4.128
Cora Diamond, “Throwing Away the Ladder”
Thomas Ricketts, “Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in W’s *Tractatus*”, section IV
Warren Goldfarb, “Metaphysics and Nonsense”
Cora Diamond, “Realism and Resolution”
Michael Kremer, “The Cardinal Problem of Philosophy”

Background readings:

Peter Hacker, “Was He Trying to Whistle It?”
Norman Malcom, *Nothing is Hidden*, Chapters 1 - 3
David Pears, *The False Prison, Volume I*, Chapters 4 and 5
Brian McGuinness, “The Supposed Realism of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”

Eighth Meeting (Tuesday, Feb. 21): On the Concept of a Resolute Reading of the *Tractatus*

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 4.2 – 4.53, 5 – 5.641, 6.53
Cora Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of the *Tractatus*”, pp. 55 - 73
Michael Kremer, “The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense”, pp. 39 - 47
Peter Sullivan, “On Trying to Be Resolute”
Conant & Diamond, “On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely”, pp. 46 - 80

Background readings:

Warren Goldfarb, “Das Überwinden”
Adrian Moore and Peter Sullivan, “Ineffability and Nonsense”
Meredith Williams: “Nonsense and Cosmic Exile”
Peter Sullivan: “What is the *Tractatus* about?”

Ninth Meeting (Tuesday, Feb. 28): The Debate around the Resolute Reading

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6 – 6.422
Michael Kremer, “The Whole Meaning of a Book of Nonsense”
Michael Kremer, “Russell’s Merit”
Roger White, *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Chapter 4

Background reading:

Cora Diamond, “Does Bismark Have a Beetle in His Box?”
Marie McGinn, “Between Metaphysics and Nonsense: The Role of Elucidation in W’s *Tractatus*”
Roger White, “Throwing the Baby Out with the Ladder”
Roger White: *The Structure of Metaphor*, selections

Tenth Meeting (Tuesday, Mar. 6): Ethics in the Tractatus

Required readings:

Wittgenstein, *Tractatus*, 6.5 – 6.522
Cora Diamond, “Ethics, Imagination, and the Method of the *Tractatus*”, pp. 73 - 90
Michael Kremer, “The Purpose of Tractarian Nonsense”, pp. 47 - 73
Piergiorgio Donatelli, “The Problem of the Higher in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”

Background readings:

Piergiorgio Donatelli, “Wittgenstein, Ethics, Religion: Early and Later”
Stephen Mulhall, “Words, Waxing and Waning”
Ben Ware, “Ethics and the Literary in Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*”
Cora Diamond, “Introduction to Having a Rough Story What Moral Philosophy Is”
Peter Hacker, “Interview with Edward Kanterian”

Eleventh Meeting (Tuesday, Mar. 13): The Relation between Early and Later Wittgenstein

Required readings:

Cora Diamond, “Wittgenstein and Metaphysics”
Conant & Diamond, “On Reading the *Tractatus* Resolutely”, pp. 80 - 87
Oskari Kuusela, “From Metaphysics and Philosophical Theses to Grammar”
Cora Diamond, “Criss-Cross Philosophy”

Background readings:

Ian Proops, "The New Wittgenstein: A Critique"

Peter Hacker, "When the Whistling Had to Stop"

Juliet Floyd, "Numbers and Ascriptions of Number in the *Tractatus*"

Oskari Kuusela, "Wittgenstein on Philosophical Problems"

Marie McGinn, *Elucidating the Tractatus*, Chapter 12