

# Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

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## 1 Office information

411 Malloy Hall  
Monday 1-4pm

## 2 This course

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is well-known in the world of professional philosophy for its radical “doctrines” about mental states, private language, semiotic reference, and anti-foundationalism. Readers of the *Philosophical Investigations* seldom agree about what those doctrines are, though, which has steered a lot of Wittgenstein scholarship in the direction of interpretive debates. Some of that critical literature is pretty good, as some compelling readings of Wittgenstein have emerged along the way. But at the same time it has a kind of ironic absurdity to it, because most readers of the *Philosophical Investigations* do agree that one of the principle aims of this book is to deflate the role of argumentative debate as the principle route to truth, understanding, insight, or what have you. At the very least it should be clear that “getting Wittgenstein right” on any or all of these sundry points, if ever there is a claim that Wittgenstein tried to put forward, while often an important step in getting at Wittgenstein’s message, is not the same thing as getting at Wittgenstein’s message. I aim to make this last goal our own in this seminar.

To that end, as we read the *Philosophical Investigations*, I invite everyone to focus on whatever themes draw their attention—but a constant focus of mine, and therefore of ours, will be on the message(s) of the book as a whole, as this is conveyed in its several points of scrutiny, but also as it is conveyed in such neglected features as its unusual literary style, its reception outside of philosophy (by sociologists, literary critics, theologians, etc.), and perhaps especially by what its readers' reactions reveal about their presuppositions and misconceptions. Surely Wittgenstein was displeased with the way that philosophers habitually frame questions and approach problems. What did he want people to do instead? Why? How does this book communicate those suggestions?

### 3 Text

You should acquire a copy of the *Philosophical Investigations*. It doesn't matter to me what edition you use. I have long enjoyed the G. E. M. Anscombe translation. Now we have the Hacker & Schulte revision of Anscombe, which some say is a significant improvement. I might try reading from it this time around. The German is really beautiful, and obviously better, if you can read it. Please do not buy the Hacker & Schulte editions that are on reserve for my undergraduates in the ND bookstore.

I will circulate other material as well, in order to give you some sense of the various ways that others have taken this book's synoptic message. I don't expect any of that material ever to be the focus of our discussion, though.

### 4 Requirements

To earn credit for this seminar, attend and participate regularly and write a paper. There is currently a lot of talk about seminar papers falling somewhere on a scale between failing and publishable. You should know that I do not refer to any such scale when I evaluate the merits of your work (I'm not even familiar with such a scale.) Good philosophy takes on a lot of different forms, and I invite you to expect me to be able to appreciate whatever philosophical message you produce, provided that it is in fact appreciable. Even if I am largely unacquainted with the form it takes, I should be able to evaluate your work and advise you about improving it. You can certainly

produce phenomenal work that I would not advise you to publish. (This is the diabolical converse of the awful truth that most published philosophical work these days is well worth avoiding.)

You may, of course, audit the course, but if you do I urge you to stay fully engaged.

## 5 Note

Please be aware of the University's policies regarding academic honesty, anti-discrimination, and access to education for students with disabilities.

Here is the web-page of the office for students with disabilities:

<http://www.nd.edu/~osd/NEWHOMEPAGE.htm>

Here is the Philosophy Department's web-page devoted to academic honesty, with links to information about plagiarism and the University's honor code:

<http://philosophy.nd.edu/undergraduate-program/honesty/>

In addition I am someone you can approach if you have concerns about discrimination or proper scholarly behavior, whether or not the concern is related to this course.

## 6 Important dates

April 21 no meeting Passover  
May 12 10:30am we meet

# Annotated Bibliography

## CONTEXT

1. Janik, A. and S. E. Toulmin. *Wittgenstein's Vienna*. Ivan R. Dee. 1996. A rich historical view of the interaction between Witt.'s thought and various artistic and scientific revolutions. Not reading this book is like not reading L. Menand's *The Metaphysical Club*, and if you don't know what I mean by that, then at least you know the names of two books I think you ought to read.
2. Monk, R. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. Penguin. 1991. A personal and psychological biography.

## WITTGENSTEINIAN PROJECTS

3. Rorty, R. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. A way into “post-modernism” via the *Investigations*. The anti-Cartesian strain is highly caffeinated here. The communitarian reading is clothed in the crucial doctrine of “epistemological behaviorism.”
4. Winch, P. *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*. Both a careful exposition of the “communitarian” take on the *Investigations* and a vision of how the human sciences ought to unfold alongside philosophy and the natural sciences.
5. Kerr, F. *Theology after Wittgenstein*. Both a careful exposition of Wittgenstein’s anti-Cartesian strain and a (too?) poetic look at the prospects for an ego-less religious experience. From the book’s title, many readers would expect a development of “fideism” (as introduced by N. Malcolm, further developed by Bouwsma.) Kerr not only leaves out any such development but argues strongly against it.
6. Williams, M. *Wittgenstein, Mind, and Meaning: towards a social conception of mind*. Routledge. The most forceful development of the communitarian reading, with detailed connections to contemporary psychology and cognitive science. For more communitarian work with connections to social sciences, see the writing of D. Bloor.

7. Murdoch, I. *The Sea, the Sea*, and other novels. The ethics of “unselfing” developed in her scholarly work is especially effective in her fiction. In (3), Rorty points to this as how to do ethics after Wittgenstein.
8. Kayatilleke, K. N. *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*. Many scholars have observed something of Siddhartha’s ineffable *suchness* in Wittgenstein (see essays by J. Canfield, D. Z. Phillips, and R. Read). Kayatilleke aims in the opposite direction.
9. Maddy, P. *Second Philosophy*. Its pretensions deflated, philosophy’s problems don’t all dissolve. Some get rephrased on the frontiers of normal inquiry. (Compare Rorty’s defense of philosophical naifs in (11) (but don’t tell Pen you did this!))

#### THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

10. Hacker, P. M. S. “Philosophy,” in Glock’s volume.
11. Rorty, R. “Keeping philosophy pure: an essay on Wittgenstein,” in his *Consequences of Pragmatism*.
12. Stroud, B. “Wittgenstein’s ‘treatment’ of the quest for ‘a language which describes my inner experience and which only I myself can understand,’” in his *Meaning, Understanding, and Practice*. Oxford.
13. Lear, Jonathan. “Leaving the world alone,” in Williams’s volume.
14. Fogelin, R. J. “Wittgenstein’s critique of philosophy,” in Sluga and Stern’s volume.
15. Garver, N. “Philosophy as grammar.” in Sluga and Stern’s volume.

#### READING THE INVESTIGATIONS

16. Goldfarb, W. “I want you to bring me a slab: remarks on the opening sections of the *Investigations*,” in Williams’s volume.
17. Cavell, S. “Notes and afterthoughts on the opening of Wittgenstein’s *Investigations*,” in Sluga and Stern’s volume.

18. Stern, D. “Wittgenstein’s critique of referential theories of meaning and the paradox of ostentation, *PI* §§26–48,” in Zamuner and Levy’s volume.

#### NORMATIVITY

18. Stroud, B. “Wittgenstein on logical necessity,” in Moser (ed.) *A Priori Knowledge*. Oxford. pgs. 68-84.
19. Canfield, J. “Anthropological science fiction and logical necessity.” *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 4. pgs. 105-17.
20. Kripke, S. *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*. Cambridge. (esp. pgs. 1–113.) Up until the appearance of this great book, everyone who wrote about the matter took it for granted that Wittgenstein’s point was that the interpretation of rules, being indeterminate in their specification, was grounded in communal practices. Kripke pointed out a couple of different ways to take Wittgenstein—this one and also one in which an individual can muster resources to overcome indeterminateness. He argues for “communitarianism” after all, but by arguing for what everyone had been taking for granted, he opened the floodgates to “individualist” readings that followed shortly afterwards (C. McGuin and others). Another debate arose about whether these communitarian and individualist solutions are supposed to be “skeptical” or “straight” solutions. Kripke saw a skeptical solution. D. Bloor sees a straight communitarian solution (as presumably most writers before Kripke had done; Fogelin, at least, was explicit about this.) Then there is the “no solution” option: transform yourself so that you no longer see the problem. McDowell called this position “transcendental,” so I do too.
21. Blackburn, S. “The individual strikes back.” *Synthese* 58. 281-301. (individualist)
22. Summerfield, D. “*PI* 201: a Wittgensteinian reply to Kripke.” *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28. pgs. 417-38. (transcendentalist)
23. Goldfarb, W. “Kripke on Wittgenstein on rules.” *Journal of Philosophy* 82. pgs. 471-88. (transcendentalist)
24. Diamond, C. “Realism and the realistic spirit.” Chapter one of her *The Realistic Spirit*. MIT. (transcendentalist)

25. McDowell, J. "Wittgenstein on following a rule," in Williams's volume. (transcendentalist)
26. Hoffman, P. "Kripke on private language." *Philosophical Studies* 47. pgs. 23-8. (individualist)
27. Wright, C. "Wittgenstein's later philosophy of mind: sensation, privacy, and intention," in Williams's volume. (transcendentalist)