

WITTGENSTEIN AND THE LIMITS OF OUR WORLD

Times MWF 10-12, Gilman 219

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Office hours W 12:30-1:30, Gilman 267 (Tammo); F 12:30-1:30, Gilman 267 (Itai)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein argues that in philosophy, we are often trying to say things that cannot be said. He set himself the task of showing the limits of what can be expressed in language and thought. He arrives at the conclusion that much that passes under the name of “Philosophy”, from questions of truth to value and the good, is nonsensical. In this course, we will read this important text closely.

GOALS

We want to try a ‘close reading’ of the *Tractatus*. This will provide an understanding of Wittgenstein’s early philosophy and improve on students’ ability to critically engage with complex texts. The *Tractatus* can also allow students to better understand other issues in philosophy of mind and language as well as introduce the to the origins of analytic philosophy.

REQUIREMENTS

Like all Intersession classes, this class is graded S/U for all students. A satisfactory grade requires regular attendance (no more than one unexcused absence) and active participation. In addition you need to submit two class preparations in advance of meetings. These preparations contain summaries of the main ideas and arguments in that day’s assigned readings (roughly 10 % of the original text’s length) as well as open questions, thoughts and tentative criticisms you may have developed in reading the materials. For a “satisfactory” grade, both submissions need to be graded “satisfactory”.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Ethical violations include cheating on exams, plagiarism, reuse of assignments, improper use of the internet and electronic devices, unauthorized collaboration, alteration of graded assignments, forgery and falsification, lying, facilitating academic dishonesty, and unfair competition. Report any violations you witness to the instructor. You may consult the associate dean of students and/or the chairman of the Ethics Board beforehand. See the guide on “Academic Ethics for Undergraduates” at <https://studentaffairs.jhu.edu/policies-guidelines/undergrad-ethics/> for more information.

ACCOMMODA- TIONS

If you are a student with a disability or believe that you might have a disability that requires special accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services to obtain a letter from a specialist: Garland 385; (410) 516 4720; studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu

CLASS
SCHEDULE

Readings in [brackets] are not required but will be in the background of discussions and are listed for easier reference. We will be using D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness's 1961 translation of the *Tractatus* published by Routledge with an introduction by Bertrand Russell. You can buy any edition of the TLP that contains this translation and introduction as we will be navigating using Wittgenstein's enumeration of the propositions. All readings other than the TLP are on Blackboard.

Jan 7: Housekeeping; Frege, On Sense and Reference

Gottlob Frege, On Sinn and Bedeutung. Transl. by Max Black. In: Michael Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, Wiley Blackwell 1997, 151-71.

(Very short) excerpt from: Gottlob Frege, 'The Foundations of Arithmetics'. Transl. by Max Black. In: Michael Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, Wiley Blackwell 1997, 84-129, here p. 90.

[Gottlob Frege, On Concept and Object. In: Michael Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, Wiley Blackwell 1997, 181-193.]

[Gottlob Frege, Selections from the 'Begriffsschrift'. Transl. by Max Black. In: Michael Beaney (ed.), *The Frege Reader*, Wiley Blackwell 1997, 47-79.]

[Bertrand Russell, On Denoting. *Mind* 14, 56 (1905), 479-493.]

[Roger White, Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*: A Reader's Guide, Continuum 2006, ch. 1.]

Jan 9: Wittgenstein's Background; Worlds and Logical Space

Bertrand Russell, Introduction to the TLP.

TLP, Preface and 1 - 2.063.

[Eli Friedlander, *Signs of Sense*, Harvard University Press 2001, ch. 1-2.]

Jan 11: The Picture Theory

TLP, 2.1 - 3.5.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Some Remarks on Logical Form. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 9: 162-171.

[Kelly Dean Jolley, Logic's Caretaker – Wittgenstein, Logic and the Vanishment of Russell's Paradox. *The Philosophical Forum* 35 (2004), 281-309.]

[Georg Henrik von Wright, A Biographical Sketch. In: Norman Malcolm: Ludwig Wittgenstein. A Biographical Sketch. Second Edition. Oxford University Press 2001. Pp. 7-8.]

Jan 14: Snow Day – class cancelled

Jan 16: Language and Propositions

TLP, 4 - 4.53.

[Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Notebooks 1914-1916*. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Chicago University Press 1961.]

[White, Wittgenstein's, ch. 2.]

[Cora Diamond, What Does a Concept Script Do? *The Philosophical Quarterly* 34: 343-368.]

Jan 18: Logic

TLP, 5 - 5.5571.

[Peter Geach, Wittgenstein's Operator N, *Analysis* 41 (1981), 168-171.]

[Juliet Floyd, Appendix of "Number and Ascriptions of Number in Wittgenstein's Tractatus", in id. and Sanford Shieh (eds.), *Future Pasts: The Analytic Tradition in Twentieth Century Philosophy (145-84)*. Oxford University Press 2001.]

Jan 21: MLK day

Jan 23: Nonsense

TLP, 5.6 - 7.

[Cora Diamond, What Nonsense Might Be, *Philosophy* 56 (1981), 5-22.]

[Meredith Williams, Nonsense and Cosmic Exile. The austere reading of the Tractatus, in: Max Kölbel and Bernhard Weiss (eds.), *Wittgenstein's Lasting Significance*, Routledge 2004, 6-31.]

Jan 24: Wittgenstein's Ethics (Gilman 288)

Ludwig Wittgenstein, Lecture on Ethics. *The Philosophical Review* 74 (1965), 3-12.

[Kevin Cahill, Tractarian Ethics, in: Hans Sluga and David Stern (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein* (pp. 96-125). Cambridge University Press.]

[Cora Diamond, The Tractatus and The Limits of Sense, in: Oskari Kuusela and Marie McGinn (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Wittgenstein* (pp. 240-75). Oxford University Press 2011.]

Jan 25: Early Wittgenstein and Late Wittgenstein

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*. Transl. by Elisabeth Anscombe. Blackwell, 2nd ed., 1958. Preface, 1-23, 91-124.

[White, Wittgenstein's, ch. 4.]