

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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WITTGENSTEIN'S PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS

Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* is one of the most original works in the history of philosophy. It addresses some of the most familiar questions philosophers have kept asking across the centuries. (What is truth? What is meaning? What is consciousness? What is the relationship between mind and body? What is the relationship between my mind and other minds?) It is relatively short. Its style is as simple as it is beautiful. Its influence has reached far and wide beyond the limits of philosophy. Yet its meaning is deeply controversial and, by some accounts, has barely begun to be understood. This is in part because Wittgenstein broke radically with some of the most common assumptions human beings, especially educated human beings, like to make about themselves, their minds, and the world. It is also because Wittgenstein's method shatters the traditional philosophical mould.

The purpose of this course is to give students with no prior training in philosophy intellectual access to the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is founded on the assumption that, quite apart from their standing in the philosophical tradition, Wittgenstein's teachings are interesting in their own right and shed much light on some of the most vexing intellectual problems encountered in history, religion, psychology, and other areas of knowledge in the humanities and social sciences. More important, they hold out the promise of liberation from some of the burdens placed on the shoulders of human beings by what often passes for common sense.

Wittgenstein did not give his readers many clues as to what they were going to find in different regions of the vast terrain through which he traveled. He simply divided his book into successive paragraphs of varying length without giving them any titles, headings, or subdivisions. That is important. He was convinced that any subdivision of his book into 'chapters' or 'sections' devoted to distinct 'topics' would be artificial at best, and all too likely to conflict directly with his purpose. That makes it very difficult for novices to orient themselves. I have therefore appended a table of contents to this syllabus in which the *Philosophical Investigations* are divided into sections according to topics. You will soon realize how artificial these divisions are. But they may help you to find your way about.

The method of this course is simple. We are going to read and discuss the *Philosophical Investigations* as carefully as is possible in ten weeks, and we are going to pursue some of the ways in which the

Philosophical Investigations can help to arrive at a better understanding of such issues as the harmony between thought and reality, the concept of a social science, natural law, moral relativism, and the study of history. The format will be a flexible mixture of lecture and discussion. I will focus on explaining what I take Wittgenstein to be saying, but I will also encourage you to raise whatever questions you may have, so that I can address them in class whenever the occasion arises.

In the first five weeks of the course we are going to give the entire book a quick read-through. That will give you a minimal degree of familiarity with the *Philosophical Investigations* as a whole, a preliminary sense of the way the book is organized, and an overview of the many different themes it addresses. During those five weeks I will spend much of the time talking about the most basic issues Wittgenstein raises and the most fundamental ways in which his perspective differs from others.

In the second half of the course we are going to look more closely at some of the basic issues that an understanding of the *Philosophical Investigations* can help to clarify. In order to give you some points of departure for more focused and productive discussions I have assigned a series of articles and chapters that are particularly influential, illuminating, or stimulating.

Registration is limited to undergraduate students. There are no prerequisites other than a willingness to read, think, write, and speak your mind in class.

A Note on the Text:

The text of the *Philosophical Investigations* has a complicated history. You do not need to know that history, but there is one issue that you do need to know about.

When G. E. M. Anscombe and Rush Rhees published the first edition of the *Philosophical Investigations* in 1953, two years after Wittgenstein's death, they decided to divide the text into two parts, which they called 'Part I' and 'Part II'. The first part consisted of a typescript with 693 numbered remarks that Wittgenstein had carefully revised over many years and completed no later than 1946. The second part consisted of 372 unnumbered remarks in 14 numbered sections, whose length ranges from less than a page to more than thirty pages. Wittgenstein had selected these remarks from manuscripts written from 1946 to 1949.

Ever since the publication of the first edition of the *Philosophical Investigations*, there has been doubt about the wisdom of the decision to include these remarks and to call them 'Part II'. The editors did so because they were convinced that Wittgenstein would have added a thoroughly revised version of these remarks to the 693 preceding paragraphs. That may very well be true. Even so it is important to recognize that Wittgenstein did not write a single book divided in two parts. He wrote a single book, and it consists of what is now called 'Part I'. 'Part II' was written later than 'Part I', its subject matter is different from 'Part I', and it was not nearly as carefully revised and re-arranged as 'Part I'.

For these reasons the editors of the text we are going to use—the 4th edition, published in 2009—decided to restrict the title *Philosophical Investigations* to the part that used to be called 'Part I' and to treat 'Part II' as an independent piece of writing, which they called *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*. But for more than half a century readers of Wittgenstein have been familiar with the *Philosophical Investigations* as a single book divided in two parts. Even the editors of the new edition could not bring themselves to exclude 'Part II' from their edition altogether. Although they did give 'Part II' a new title, their edition continues to include all of the material that was included in the first

edition. And although they would like to restrict the title *Philosophical Investigations* to the part that used to be called 'Part I', they have also called the whole volume *Philosophical Investigations*. The part now called *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment* figures nowhere on the title page.

We are going to read the whole volume, and we are going to take advantage of the numbers the editors have assigned to the paragraphs in the second part, which finally make it possible to refer to those paragraphs as easily as to the paragraphs in the first part. But I may still refer to 'Part I' and 'Part II' of the *Philosophical Investigations*, if only because 'Part II' is shorter than '*Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*', and easier to understand than 'PPF'.

Required Readings:

I have asked the Seminary Co-op to keep these books available for purchase:

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophische Untersuchungen = Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte, rev. 4th ed. (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). ISBN: 978-1405159289.

Marie McGinn, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations* (London: Routledge, 1997). ISBN: 978-0415452564. Also available online through the Regenstein Library Catalog.

Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge & Paul, 2008). ISBN: 978-0415423588

The articles you are required to read in the second half of the course are all available on Chalk in the section "Course Documents."

Recommended Readings:

For students who would like to read further, I have asked the Seminary Co-op to keep the following books in stock as well:

Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991). This is widely regarded as the best biography.

Duncan Richter, *Historical Dictionary of Wittgenstein's Philosophy* (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2004). This is a useful tool for beginners. It includes a chronology, an overview of Wittgenstein's life and thought, a bibliography, and short articles on philosophical concepts and doctrines, people Wittgenstein knew, philosophers who mattered to him, places he visited, works he never published, and so on. It also gives clear guidance on some of the fundamental issues on which the most careful readers of Wittgenstein disagree with each other.

Gordon P. Baker and P. M. S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein, Understanding and Meaning: Volume 1 of an Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations, Part I: Essays* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). There is no better single tool to gain a detailed understanding of the *Philosophical Investigations* than Baker and Hacker's *Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations*.

Each of the four volumes consists of two parts. In the first part, the authors offer short, systematic essays designed to explain Wittgenstein's treatment of particular topics. In the second part, the authors comment in detail on each successive paragraph of the *Philosophical Investigations*. Throughout, the authors do an outstanding job of placing Wittgenstein's views in a larger philosophical and historical context, showing the relationship between different passages, and explaining their place in Wittgenstein's thinking and the development of his thinking over time. I have ordered only part I of the first volume because that is the most reasonably priced and most useful volume for the purposes of this course.

I have asked Regenstein Library to keep all of these books on reserve.

For students who would like to take their reading still further I have compiled a separate reading guide. You will find it on Chalk in the same folder as this syllabus. I have placed a number of my favorite readings (and some of my own articles) in the Chalk folder entitled 'Documents'. That is where you will also find the articles assigned below, in the folder called 'Required Readings'.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and class participation: 20% of the grade.
2. Two papers of five to eight pages of text (plus a separate title page and a list of works cited), double-spaced in a standard font: 40% of the grade for each paper.

For the first paper, I will give you a list of *sections* in the *Philosophical Investigations* and ask you to explain the meaning of one of them as thoroughly as you can.

For the second paper, I will give you a list of *questions about* the *Philosophical Investigations* and ask you to answer one of them as thoroughly as you can.

If you would like to write your papers on some other subjects, I'm open to suggestions.

The first paper is due in my office (or in my mail slot on the sixth-floor landing of the Harper West Tower if the entrance to my office suite is locked) by 4 pm on Thursday of fifth week (February 4). The second paper is due in my office (or in my mail slot on the sixth-floor landing of the Harper West Tower if the entrance to my office suite is locked) by 4 pm on Thursday of ninth week (March 3). Turn in **two hard copies** of each of your papers. Do not send email attachments. The grade for late papers will be lowered by one step (e.g., from A to A-, or B to B-) at the beginning of each 24-hour period past the deadline.

The following rules are elementary, but I state them anyway so as to be clear about them. Your papers must be the result of your own independent work. If you rely on information or insights you found in someone else's writings, you must identify the source. The first time you refer to a book, you must identify the author, title and subtitle, translator and/or editor (if any), city of publication, publisher, date of publication, and relevant chapter or page numbers (if any), like this: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, trans. Charles Kay Ogden and Frank P. Ramsey (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1922). The first time you refer to an article, you must identify the author,

title of the article, title of the journal, volume number, year of publication, and page numbers (if any), like this: Cora Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder," *Philosophy* 63 (1988): 5–27. In subsequent notes you need to identify only the author, short title, and relevant page numbers. If you use someone else's words, you must use quotation marks. Do not refer to the web unless there is no other choice. If you do refer to the web, identify not only author and title, but also the address of the page to which you are referring and the time at which you accessed it. Proofread your paper before handing it in. Using a spell-checker is not good enough. Make sure that your paper has a title page and page numbers, and that you have not omitted any necessary quotation marks or citations. If you have any doubts about matters of style or formatting, look for the answer in the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

It is your responsibility to follow these rules. If you don't follow them, you will hurt your grade and you may run the risk of committing plagiarism. For more information, see Charles Lipson, *Doing Honest Work in College: How to Prepare Citations, Avoid Plagiarism, and Achieve Real Academic Success*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

If you have any questions, ask.

Schedule of readings:

PART ONE: OVERVIEW

During the first five weeks of the course, we will go over the whole text of the *Philosophical Investigations*, including the part previously known as 'Part II' and in our edition called *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*. During these weeks I will try to give you an overview and a sense of the main issues to be considered.

At some point during these weeks you should read Marie McGinn's *Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*. I will not assign specific readings for particular weeks. You do not need to read the book all at once, and you should probably not read it until you have gotten some sense of what is going on. But I do expect you to read the whole book before the middle of the quarter and to keep referring to it in order to clarify particular issues as they arise. I will also base my reading of your papers on the assumption that you are familiar with its contents.

Week 1, Monday: Introduction to the course

Week 1, Wednesday: *Philosophical Investigations*, preface and nrs. 1–88 (pp. 1–46)

Week 2, Monday: *Philosophical Investigations*, nrs. 89–133 (pp. 46–57)

Week 2, Wednesday: *Philosophical Investigations*, nrs. 134–242 (pp. 57–95)

Week 3, Monday: Martin Luther King Day - no class

Week 3, Wednesday: *Philosophical Investigations*, nrs. 243–315 (pp. 95–111)

Week 4, Monday: *Philosophical Investigations*, nrs. 316–570 (pp. 111–159)

Week 4, Wednesday: *Philosophical Investigations*, nrs. 571–693 (pp. 159–181)

Week 5, Monday: *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*, sections i–x (pp. 183–202)

Week 5, Wednesday: *Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment*, sections xi–xiv (pp. 203–243)

PART TWO: A CLOSER LOOK

In the second half of the course we are going to read the following articles in order to focus attention on issues of particular interest.

- Week 6, Monday: Barry Stroud, "Wittgenstein and Logical Necessity," in *Wittgenstein: The Philosophical Investigations*, ed. George Pitcher (London: Macmillan, 1966), 477–96.
- Week 6, Wednesday: John McDowell, "Non-Cognitivism and Rule-Following," in *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, ed. S. H. Holtzman and C. M. Leach (London: Routledge, 1981), 141–62.
- Week 7, Monday: Newton Garver, "Neither Knowing nor Not Knowing," in *This Complicated Form of Life: Essays on Wittgenstein*, by Newton Garver (Chicago: Open Court, 1994), 159–76.
- Week 7, Wednesday: James Conant, "Subjective Thought," *Cahiers Parisiens. Parisian Notebooks 3* (2007): 234–58.
- Week 8, Monday: Peter Winch, "Language, Belief and Relativism," in *Trying to Make Sense*, by Peter Winch (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 194–207.
- Week 8, Wednesday: Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society," in *Rationality*, ed. Bryan R. Wilson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1970), 78–111.
- Week 9, Monday: Rush Rhees, "'Responsibility to Society'," "'Natural Law' and Reasons in Ethics," and "On Knowing the Difference Between Right and Wrong," in *Without Answers*, by Rush Rhees (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 86–102.
- Week 9, Wednesday: Cora Diamond, "Introduction II: Wittgenstein and Metaphysics," and "Missing the Adventure: Reply to Martha Nussbaum," in *The Realistic Spirit: Wittgenstein, Philosophy, and the Mind*, by Cora Diamond (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 13–38, 309–18.
- Week 10, Monday: Richard Rorty, "The Last Intellectual in Europe: Orwell on Cruelty," in Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 169–88; James Conant, "Rorty and Orwell on Truth," in *On Nineteen Eighty-Four: Orwell and our Future*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Jack Goldsmith, and Martha Nussbaum (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 86–111; Richard Rorty, "Response to Conant," in *Rorty and His Critics*, ed. Robert Brandom (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2000), 342–50.
- Week 10, Wednesday: Peter Winch, Selections from *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge & Paul, 2008), "Preface to the second edition," chap. 1, secs. 1 and secs. 8–9; chap. 2, secs. 1 and 5; chap. 3, secs. 5–7; chap. 5, secs. 3–4.

Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> (previously known as PART I of the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>)		
Sections	Topics	Pages
Preface	Origins and character of the book	1–4
nrs. 1–7	Introduction: The Augustinian picture and the fog it spreads by reducing language to naming things with words; the use of language games to dispel the fog	5–8
nrs. 8–88	The reality of language and its misunderstanding by nominalism and idealism	8–46
nrs. 8–25	In reality language is a manifold of countless different activities; meaning is grounded in the social practices that constitute the human form of life	8–16
nrs. 26–32	In order to give a name to anything, you must already have mastered language	16–19
nrs. 33–7	Refusing to recognize that one must already be able to use language in order to name something leads to superstitious beliefs in spirits, essences, mental objects, etc.	19–22
nrs. 38–64	One superstition is that "this" is the only <i>real</i> name; there are no such things as "simples" in an absolute sense. The relation between a name and its meaning is established by correct use of the name.	22–35
nrs. 65–88	Another superstition: clarity of meaning requires precise definition. In fact, "essence" consists of family resemblances; trying to turn language into an exact calculus damages meaning	35–46
nrs. 89–133	The nature and purpose of philosophy	46–57
nrs. 89–90	The concept of a grammatical investigation	46–7
nrs. 91–106	The temptation to look for a crystalline, pure, logical essence leads into metaphysical confusion	47–51
nrs. 107–17	We need to turn the whole inquiry round the axis of our real need in order to lift the confusion	51–3
nrs. 118–33	The purpose of philosophy	53–7
nrs. 134–84	What does it mean to understand something?	57–95
nrs. 134–42	The theory that propositions represent the world as a picture represents an object explains nothing; understanding presupposes the ability to apply the picture	57–62
nrs. 143–55	Understanding a series of numbers in counting, or a series of letters and words in reading, does not consist of any single mental process or state of the brain	62–7
nrs. 156–66	The case of reading shows how many different varieties of understanding there are even in as simple as case as this	67–2
nrs. 167–78	It doesn't help to say that reading consists some kind of essential process or some special kind of experience; there is no such "essence" to reading; it only seems so from hindsight	72–6
nrs. 179–84	Learning how to follow a rule consists of learning how to use it in many different cases; that is how the rule is connected to understanding; the criterion we use to tell if someone has understood the rule is that person's ability to use the rule in different circumstances	78–80
nrs. 185–242	What does it mean to understand something correctly?	80–95
nrs. 185–97	The correct use of a rule makes it possible to create definitions, but such definitions do not predetermine anything. They merely seem to do so in the normal case. First, a use must be established; otherwise there is no understanding	80–6

nrs. 198–205	Following a rule is a custom. It is not an interpretation	86–8
nrs. 206–17	The ability to follow rules correctly is grounded in the shared behavior of human beings	88–91
nrs. 218–42	The illusion of compulsion created by rules and the reality of human agreement in form of life and human agreement in judgments—what Cicero called <i>consensus iuris</i>	91–5
nrs. 243–315	Could there be an absolutely private language, such that no one but the speaker could understand it?	95–111
nrs. 243–55	How does one actually name one's sensations? In which sense are they "private"? Actually I don't <i>know</i> my sensations; I <i>have</i> them. Expressing a feeling is quite different from describing it	95–8
nrs. 256–80	There is no such thing as naming sensations in a purely private language, let alone naming them correctly; there is no such thing as one's purely private impression of red	98–103
nrs. 281–8	The Cartesian objectification of mind and body does not manage to grasp the nature of sensations; behaviorism misses the point; only of living human beings and what resembles them does it make sense to say they have sensations	103–5
nrs. 289–315	Introspection, supposed inner processes, or trying to exhibit one's sensation to oneself in private do not yield any knowledge of sensation: the beetle in the box. Sensations are exhibited and known like everything else	106–11
nrs. 316–570	Thinking and the harmony between thought and reality	111–59
nrs. 316–62	Thoughts and their expression versus the experience and expression of sensations; the law of the excluded middle does not hold where there are no criteria of identity	111–21
nrs. 363–97	The nature of images and the imagination; comparing images; calculating in the head; essence versus experience; no ostensive explanation	121–7
nrs. 398–411	Visual impressions and sense data; no "this"; the visual room; self and self–reference without criteria of identity; solipsism and the distinction between self and other	127–31
nrs. 412–27	The false mystery of consciousness; there is no ostensive explanation by introspection	131–5
nrs. 428–65	The connection between thought and reality is made in language, not with images; dualism and the correspondence theory of truth fail to account for the harmony of thought and reality; language tells you how wishes, orders, and expectations are fulfilled; images cannot explain negation; nothing is hidden	135–41
nrs. 466–90	Certainty is grounded in practice; the grounds for belief are not found by induction; reasons and fear; the past; experience and justification by experience	141–5
nrs. 491–521	The limits of language: grammar & sense vs. experimental science & effects; sense & nonsense; the "arbitrariness" of grammar; reality & possibility; "mere answers"	145–50
nrs. 522–46	Different kinds of understanding for understanding different kinds of things: pictures, fiction, music, aspects, emotions	150–5
nrs. 547–57	The essence of negation: varieties of negation, identity, double negation	155–7
nrs. 558–70	The essence of meaning; varieties of meaning; language and concepts as instruments	157–9
nrs. 571–693	Philosophical psychology	159–81
nrs. 571–80	The criteria for psychological phenomena differ from the criteria for physical phenomena. Psychological states (hoping, believing, expecting) differ from psychological processes like thinking, feeling, experiencing	159–61
nrs. 581–94	The criteria for psychological phenomena are not to be found in inner experiences or in anything else that is going on at the same time, but in the context and the surroundings (the history that has gone on before and will go on after)	161–4

nrs. 595–606	Familiarity with something, recognition of something, and memories of something need to be distinguished from feeling or doing something	164–6
nrs. 607–10	The case of guessing the time shows how we invent psychological phenomena when we do not understand how we do what we do	166–7
nrs. 611–19	The will does not consist of a special experience or feeling	167–9
nrs. 620–8	Doing something does not consist of a special experience or feeling either	169–71
nrs. 629–32	The predictability of actions differs from the predictability of events	171
nrs. 633–60	The significance of historical surroundings for understanding what it means to intend something and to remember one's intention	172–6
nrs. 661–93	Meaning something: the connection between words and things	176–81
Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment</i> (previously known as PART II of the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>)		
Sections	Topics	Pages
i	Hope, grief, and fear are states of mind; they must not be confused with any special feelings; they depend on the context, and they are known from the context	183
ii	Meaning something is different from feeling something or experiencing something	184–5
iii	The meaning of an image is not an image; it is what is intended	186
iv	The soul is not an object of belief	187
v	One understands human beings by understanding their behavior and the characteristics of their behavior; one does so without making assumptions	188–9
vi	Meaning and understanding are entirely distinct from feeling and experience; understanding something cannot substitute for feeling it or experiencing	190–2
vii	Dreaming, remembering dreams, and consciousness	193
viii	One does not know about one's movements on the basis of kinesthetic sensations	194–5
ix	The context of grief and fear determines both how grief and fear are expressed and how they are observed and described. One can express feelings and mental states and one can report or describe feelings and mental states in one and the same sentence; but the expression is not the same as the report or description	196–8
x	Belief is a case in which the expression of a mental state is peculiarly difficult to distinguish from the description of a mental state (Moore's paradox)	199–202
xi.111–260 xi.261–364	A close look at aspect-seeing clarifies the differences between reporting or describing perceptions and expressing or experiencing a perception. It also clarifies the differences between understanding the meaning of a word and experiencing the meaning of a word. Knowledge of psychological phenomena must be distinguished from the experience of psychological phenomena; criteria for the truth of a psychological description differ from criteria for the truthfulness of a confession; for different kinds of psychological phenomena there are different kinds of knowledge, doubt, and certainty	203–25 225–40
xii	The relationship of concept formation to nature and natural history	241
xiii	Remembering something is not to be confused with an experience of something	242
xiv	The conceptual confusion in contemporary psychology and mathematics	243