Wittgenstein: Readings from the *Philosophical Investigations*

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2017–18 Winter Term

No. of Credits: 2. No. of ECTS credits: 4

Time-Period of the Course: one semester

Course Level: Elective

## Description

The course will be based on a close reading of parts of the *Philosophical Investigations* and some other late work by Wittgenstein. I shall start with Wittgenstein’s remarks on voluntary action, as this subject is relevant to the work of several students. We shall then continue with his related remarks on intention and meaning something. I shall then turn to Wittgenstein’s remarks on sensation language, including the discussion of the possibility of a language about private sensations (misleadingly called the “private language argument”). However, we may adapt the sections we read to students’ interests. We shall also apply Wittgenstein’s ideas to some current discussions in the philosophy of mind and elsewhere. Additionally, we shall learn how to read the *Investigations*, this most influential and controversial philosophical text of the twentieth century.

## Course requirements

Attendance, readings and participation in discussion.

## Assessment

Term paper of approximately 2500 words, preferably interpreting passages from Wittgenstein’s writings. Students should consult me about the paper’s subject.

## Course goals

Better knowledge and understanding of Wittgenstein’s insightful and highly influential ideas. Familiarity with the way Wittgenstein’s texts should be read and studied.

## Learning outcomes

A better informed and critical approach to questions in the philosophy of mind and language, and to philosophical methodology more generally.

## Readings

The main readings are from the *Philosophical Investigations* and other late writings by Wittgenstein.

The secondary literature on Wittgenstein is huge. Students unfamiliar with Wittgenstein’s thought would do well to read some introduction to it. Some good introductions are:

* Kenny, A. 1973. *Wittgenstein*. Penguin Books.
* Schroeder, S. 2006. *Wittgenstein: The Way Out of the Fly-bottle*. Polity Press.

Another helpful book is Hans-Johann Glock’s *A Wittgenstein Dictionary* (Blackwell 1995), which contains discussions of practically all the main issues that occupy Wittgenstein in his writings, as well as an annotated detailed bibliography, albeit not updated.

The books by Baker and Hacker are the most detailed and in-depth study of the *Philosophical Investigations* and contain, apart from a section-by-section exegesis, many helpful essays:

Baker, G. P. and Hacker, P. M. S. *An Analytical Commentary on the* Philosophical Investigations. Volumes I–IV (the last two volumes written by Hacker alone; the first two were revised by him during the former decade). Blackwell.

It is recommended that the students consult at least some of these books before and during the discussion of the relevant paragraphs in class.