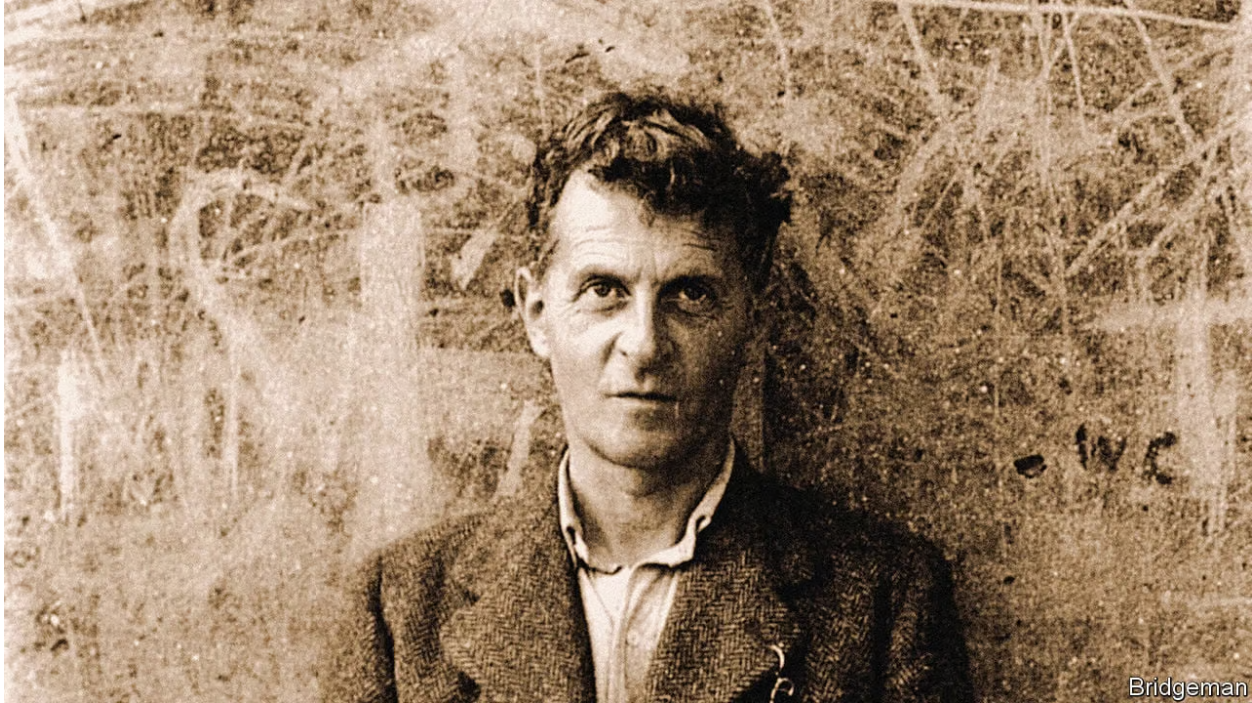


PHIL 4085: Wittgenstein

Fall 2023 | M/W 1:00 – 2:15pm | Blegen 205



Ludwig Wittgenstein, in Swansea, Wales, September 1947. Photo by Ben Richards.

Instructor: Dr. Philip Bold | bold0169@umn.edu | Heller 717
Office hours: M 11-12pm & by appointment

Course Description: This is a course on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein. The first two weeks will focus on crucial background in the history of philosophy, including major ideas from Plato (& Socrates), René Descartes, and David Hume, with emphasis placed on their (either explicit or assumed) views about the nature of language and meaning. Then we will shift to works by Wittgenstein which put these views into question. More specifically, we will examine Wittgenstein's views about language in his early and later life which purport to show that the work of his predecessors is meaningless – going beyond the bounds of what can be meaningfully expressed in language. Although we will primarily aim to understand Wittgenstein's views on these matters, a careful study of his views will give us many opportunities to address the following questions on their own terms: What is language? What makes an expression in language meaningful (or meaningless)? Given our answers to these questions, what kinds of restrictions does this place on what can be meaningfully discussed in philosophy?

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students in the course **can identify, define, and solve problems.**

Addressing the outcome

In this course, students will grapple with some of the most trenchant and perennial issues of philosophy, which have troubled its practitioners for thousands of years. By studying the perspective of Ludwig Wittgenstein, students will be given an opportunity to investigate how these problems should be properly formulated and given numerous examples of their clear and definitive resolution. The proposed resolutions, however, will not be studied uncritically and thus students will be given ample opportunities to scrutinize them and form their own educated position on the relevant subjects.

Assessment of learning related to the outcome

The learning related to this outcome will be evaluated through regular participation in class discussion, a series of critical papers in which students will be required to clearly formulate their own reasoning on a particular theme, including a final paper in which students will conduct an extended critique of a central issue discussed in the course.

Required Texts: There is one required text for this course and two optional texts (all of which are available at the university bookstore). All readings besides those found in the required text will be posted on Canvas.

Required (1) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Revised 4th Edition
Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte

Optional (2) Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus: Centenary Edition*
Edited by Luciano Bazzochi
Translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness

(3) James C. Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*

Required Assignments:

1. Bi-Weekly Discussion Posts (8 total) 10%
2. Two papers
 - a. Paper 1 25%
 - b. Paper 2 35%
3. Participation 30%
 - a. Attendance
 - b. Quality of Discussion Posts
 - c. Class Discussion

Due Dates:

Discussion Posts	Wednesdays before 1pm
Paper 1	Sat Oct 21 by midnight
Paper 2	Wed Dec 20 by midnight

Course Schedule

- * Schedule is subject to change. * Complete readings prior to class.
- * Required (and optional) audio/video content will be posted on Canvas.

Introduction

Wed Sep 6 – Welcome!

Syllabus

‘Ludwig Wittgenstein’ (School of Life)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQ33gAyhg2c>

Optional: Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, Preface, pp. 1-5*

Optional: Monk, ‘A Sketch of Wittgenstein’s Life’

*Page numbers for Klagge’s book are those included in the shared PDF (not the printed copy).

(Some) Historical Background

Mon Sep 11 – Socrates’ Elenchus and the Search for Essences

Plato, *Euthyphro* (Selections)

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Sep 13 – Plato’s Doctrine of Forms and Recollection

Plato, ‘Allegory of the Cave’ (from Plato’s *Republic*)

Plato, *Meno* (Selections: Doctrine of Recollection)

Mon Sep 18 – Descartes’ Inner Quest for Absolute Certainty

Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Selections)

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Sep 20 – Hume’s Theory of Ideas & Thesis of No-Self

‘The Origin of Ideas’ (from *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*)

‘We have no Substantial Self’ (ibid)

Optional: John Locke, ‘Of Words’

[*Note:* ‘Of Words’ is an optional reading for Wed Sep 20, but you *must* read it before our next class on Mon Sep 25]

Optional: *Upanishads*, ‘The Self is the Ultimate Reality (Atman = Brahman)’

Optional: Buddhism, ‘There is no Self (Anatman)’

Early Wittgenstein – *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP)

Note: The page numbers for TLP listed below are **the large, Arial numbers found on the top left and bottom right corners of our ‘Tractatus (Selections)’ document.** Please ignore the page numbers in the bottom, center area of each page.

Mon Sep 25 – ‘The final solution of the problems’
TLP Title page & Preface, pp. 1-3
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, Preface, pp. 1-5
Optional: Mounce, *Wittgenstein’s Tractatus (WT)*, ‘Introduction’, pp. 1-15
Optional: Shapiro, ‘Frege and Russell’s Logicism’
Optional: Monk, ‘A Sketch of Wittgenstein’s Life’

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Sep 27 – ‘The world is all that is the case’
TLP pp. 4-16
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 6-17
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 1. Fact and Thing’, pp. 16-21

Mon Oct 2 – ‘We picture facts to ourselves’
TLP pp. 17-38
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 18-26
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 2. The Proposition as Picture’, pp. 22-34

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Oct 4 – ‘A proposition is a picture of reality’
TLP pp. 39-50
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 33-39
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 2. The Proposition as Picture’, pp. 22-34

Mon Oct 9 – ‘*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*’
TLP 51-59
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 40-47
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 9. Solipsism’, pp. 87-92
Optional: *Upanishads*, ‘The Self is the Ultimate Reality (*Atman = Brahman*)’
Optional: Buddhism, ‘There is no Self (*Anatman*)’

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Oct 11 – ‘The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem’
TLP 60-73
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 48-51
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 10. Value’, pp. 93-100
‘Ch 11. The Propositions of Philosophy’, pp. 101-9

Mon Oct 16 – ‘It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words’
Wittgenstein, ‘Letter to von Ficker’ (Selection from Monk, *The Duty of Genius*)
Wittgenstein, ‘Lecture on Ethics’ (1929)
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 48-51
Optional: Mounce, *WT*, ‘Ch 10. Value’, pp. 93-100, ‘Ch 11.’ pp. 101-9

Later Wittgenstein – *Philosophical Investigations* (PI)

Note: The numbers listed for readings from PI are *section numbers* – not the page numbers found on the bottom of each page.

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Oct 18 – A Summary of Wittgenstein’s Early and Later Philosophy
‘Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Philosophy’ (Video interview)
John Searle & Brian Magee (1987)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_hQpvQYhOI
Optional: Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 52-62 (‘Interlude’)
Optional: Ray Monk, ‘A Sketch of Wittgenstein’s Life’

FIRST PAPER DUE SAT OCT 21

Mon Oct 23 – ‘I should not like my writing to spare other people the trouble of thinking’
PI Preface & Section 1
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)
Optional: Ray Monk, ‘A Sketch of Wittgenstein’s Life’

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Oct 25 – ‘...a primitive idea of the way language functions’
PI 1-50 [more exact selections TBD]
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Mon Oct 30 – ‘It dispenses the fog if we study language in primitive kinds of use’
PI 1-50
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Nov 1 – ‘it’s interesting to compare the diversity of language with what logicians have said’
PI 1-50
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Mon Nov 6 – ‘a solecism to use “meaning” to signify the thing that ‘corresponds’ to a word’
PI 50-100
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Nov 8 – ‘What lies behind the idea that names really signify simples?’
PI 50-100
Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Mon Nov 13 – ‘To repeat: don’t think, but look!’

PI 50-100

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Nov 15 – ‘How would we explain to someone what a game is?’

PI 50-100

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Mon Nov 20 – ‘the inquiry must be turned around, but on the pivot of our real need’

PI 100-150

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Nov 22 – ‘The real discovery is the one that gives philosophy peace’

PI 100-150

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 63-108 (‘*Philosophical Investigations*’)

Thurs Nov 23 Thanksgiving Break

Mon Nov 27 – “‘It is as if we could grasp the whole use of the word at a stroke’”

PI 150-200

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 109-133 (‘Wittgenstein’s Applications’)

Group B: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Nov 29 – ‘In misunderstanding the use of a word, one takes it to signify an odd process’

PI 150-200

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 109-133 (‘Wittgenstein’s Applications’)

Mon Dec 4 – ‘Language is a labyrinth of paths’

PI 150-200

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 109-133 (‘Wittgenstein’s Applications’)

Group A: complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Dec 6 – ‘The words of this language are to refer to what only the speaker can know’

PI 200-250

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 109-133 (‘Wittgenstein’s Applications’)

Mon Dec 11 – ‘In what sense are my sensations *private*?’

PI 250-300

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 109-133 (‘Wittgenstein’s Applications’)

Group B: Complete discussion post before Wed class.

Wed Dec 13 – ‘What is your aim in philosophy? – To show the fly the way out of the fly-bottle.’

‘Tell them I’ve had a wonderful life!’

Concluding Reflections

Klagge, *Simply Wittgenstein*, pp. 134-141 (‘The End’)

FINAL PAPER DUE WED DEC 20 BY MIDNIGHT

Description of Assignments

Discussion posts: Discussion posts must express a substantive reaction to the assigned readings. Reactions can include (for example) a question about the text, an objection to some idea in the text, an explanation of why some idea in the text was found to be particularly exciting or compelling, a comparison of some idea in the text with the thoughts of someone else (perhaps earlier in the course), a comparison ... with some real world event or events, an explanation of how an optional reading, video, or recording relates to the major text, among other possibilities. Discussion posts must be a minimum of 4-5 sentences and should be written *clearly* and *thoughtfully*. **It is well worth putting good effort into these because they are used in the instructor’s planning of class discussion.**

Students will be split into two groups (A & B) and members of each group will alternate from week to week in writing discussion posts. (To be clear: every individual in each group is required to write their own separate post – the groups *do not* complete a single post ‘as a team’.) For instance, members of Group A will be *required* to write their own individual posts before class on Wednesday September 13th (while writing is optional for members of Group B); members of Group B will be *required* to write individual posts before class on Wednesday September 20th (while writing is optional for members of Group A), and so on.

Discussion posts are simply graded for completion (of sufficient quality), but their general quality will be factored into one’s *Participation grade*. If one’s discussion post is not of sufficient quality, they will be contacted by the instructor and given an opportunity for a redo.

Paper Assignments (double-spaced, 12-point font, Times New Roman, 1-inch Margins):

Two total writing assignments are required for this class (to be submitted via Canvas). Instructions will be posted online.

Participation (in Class Discussion): Discussion is the core of this class. That is why participation counts for 30% of your course grade. You should come to *every class* prepared to talk about the assigned readings and the course topics. The participation component of your grade will also factor in your attendance record as well as the regular completion and quality of your forum posts. Please feel free to check in with me at any point in the semester if you are ever concerned about your participation.

The instructor will frequently send out 4-5 questions about assigned readings 1-2 days before the relevant class. Students are expected to either write down rough answers to these questions before

coming to the relevant class OR *rough* notes OR if some question seemed impossible to answer, the student should write down why the question was challenging for them (or if applicable state their *own opinion* regarding the question – e.g., if the question were ‘What does Wittgenstein say is the fundamental nature of all language?’, and you cannot answer this, then answer for yourself, ‘What do *you* think is the nature of all language?’).

Course Policies

1. **Use of technology in the classroom:** Since this is a discussion-based course, students are highly encouraged not to use laptops or e-readers in the classroom. Laptops tend to distract students from the events of class (both those using them and those in their vicinity), detracting from the quality of our discussion and thus of students’ learning. Phones are prohibited from use in class unless special permission has been granted. **Remember that participation is worth 30% of your final grade for the course.**
2. **Late Work:** Unless special permission is obtained in advance, late papers will not be accepted without grade penalty. The penalty for late papers is 5% for every day the paper is submitted past the official deadline. Discussion posts cannot be made up and must be completed on time for credit. Extensions *on paper assignments* are granted liberally, but you *must* receive permission from the instructor. Extensions on discussion posts will require a formal excuse with evidence, such as a medical note or a note from a parent in the case of a family emergency.
3. **Grading:** Final grades will be calculated using the following scale.

F	D-	D	D+	C-	C	C+	B-	B	B+	A-	A
0	62	65	68	72	75	78	82	85	88	92	95

Below is a list of criteria that will be used to evaluate your papers. Note that the %’s only give a *rough* indication of how important these aspects are, and that not all of the criteria will apply equally to each of the different assignments; this is not a mathematical scale. There will be slightly different standards for each of the individual assignments, which I will state when those assignments are announced.

- Quality of ideas (50%)
 - *Range and depth of argument; fair representation of philosopher’s position; logic of argument; quality and/or originality of thought; appropriate sense of the complexity of the topic; appropriate awareness of opposing views.*
- Organization and Argumentation (40%)
 - *Clarity of thesis statement in the introduction; logical and clear arrangement of ideas; effective use of transitions; unity and coherence of paragraphs; good development of arguments through supporting details and evidence.*

- Clarity, style, and grammar (10%)
 - *Ease of readability; appropriate voice, tone, and style for the assignment; clarity of sentence structure; grammatically correct sentences; accurate spelling; careful proofreading.*

4. **Plagiarism:** Plagiarism will result in a final grade of F for the course. If you have any questions about plagiarism or how to properly cite sources, do not hesitate to ask me. According to the UMN Student Conduct Code: “Plagiarism shall mean representing the words, creative work, or ideas of another person as one’s own without providing proper documentation of source”.

5. **ChatGPT:** The Board of Regents Student Conduct Code states the following in Section IV, Subd.1: Scholastic Dishonesty:

"Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarism; cheating on assignments or examinations, including the unauthorized use of online learning support and testing platforms; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work, including the posting of student-generated coursework on **online learning support and testing platforms** not approved for the specific course in question; taking, acquiring, or using course materials without faculty permission, including the posting of faculty-provided course materials on online learning and testing platforms; ..."

Artificial intelligence (AI) language models, such as ChatGPT, and online assignment help tools, such as Chegg®, are examples of **online learning support platforms**: they can not be used for course assignments except as explicitly authorized by the instructor. The following actions are prohibited in this course:

- Submitting all or any part of an assignment statement to an online learning support platform;
- Incorporating any part of an AI generated response in an assignment;
- Using AI to summarize or contextualize source materials.

If you are in doubt as to whether you are using an online learning support platform appropriately in this course, I encourage you to discuss your situation with me.

6. **Disability Accommodations:** If you have, or think you have, a disability in any area such as mental health, attention, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical, please contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) <https://ars.unc.edu/> to arrange confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations. If you are registered with the DRC and have a disability accommodation letter dated for this semester or this year, please contact Dr. Bold early in the semester to review how the accommodations will be applied in this course.

7. **Sexual Misconduct.** Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, and relationship violence) includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors,

and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such behavior is prohibited in the University setting.

Per the [U of M policy on sexual harassment](#), *I am required to share information that I learn about possible sexual misconduct* with the campus Title IX office. Within the requirements of my job, I will be as responsive as possible to your requests for confidentiality and support. You can also, or alternately, choose to talk with a confidential resource that will not share information that they learn about sexual misconduct. Confidential resources include:

- The Aurora Center 24hr Helpline (612-626-9111)
- Boynton Mental Health (612-624-1444)
- Student Counseling Services (612-624-3323)

8. Other Useful Resources:

- Technology resources for remote learning: <https://it.umn.edu/working-learning-campus/get-internet-access-campus>
- University Policies: <https://policy.umn.edu/>
- Student Writing Support: <http://writing.umn.edu/sws/>
- Disability Resource Center: <https://disability.umn.edu/>
- Student Counseling Center: <https://counseling.umn.edu/>
- The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <https://plato.stanford.edu>