PHIL 253: Analytic Philosophy of Language

Spring 2024 / MW 1:00–2:30 (Union 111) / Syllabus v3.2

Instructor: Chuck Goldhaber   **Contact**: `cgoldhaber@haverford.edu`
Office Hours: Wednesday 12:30–1, 2:30–4   **Office**: Gest 204

Course Description

Our interface with the world is thoroughly shaped by our use of language. This course explores the extent to which studying the logic, grammar, structure, or use of language can teach us about how the world is. We will trace the historical development of 20th-century analytic philosophy of language, starting with Frege's logical explication of reference, through Wittgenstein's enigmatic and often playful *Philosophical Investigations*, to later 20th-century applications of linguistic analysis to topics in philosophy of mind and epistemology. We will close by discussing how language structures our social world, both reinforcing and undoing oppression.

Course Goals

By the end of the term, you will be able to. . .

– read and understand technical prose, including linguistic terms and logical notation.

– succinctly reconstruct and critically evaluate abstract philosophical argument.

– thoughtfully engage with differing perspectives verbally and in writing.

– appreciate the relevance of linguistic, grammatical, and logical analysis to other topics in philosophy, as well as to social justice.

Course Requirements   Course grade %

– Up to 40 pages per week of dense philosophical reading

– Readiness to learn and use various logical notations

– Regular participation in class discussion   20%

– Eight problem sets, often with essay components   each 10%

Required Texts

– Ed. Beaney, Michael. 1997. *The Frege Reader*. Blackwell Publishing. (ISBN: 9780631194453).   [= **FR**]

– Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1953/2010. *Philosophical Investigations*. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe et al. Wiley-Blackwell. (ISBN: 9781405159296)   [= **PI**]

– All other readings will be made available on Moodle.   [= **M**]

Readings

In the schedule below, readings are listed underneath the dates by which they must be read. Many readings are dense and tough. Make sure you budget enough time to read the reading carefully, and perhaps several times.

Always bring the week's required reading to class. Please acquire the exact editions of the books listed above. (Try searching by ISBN, if buying online.)

Participation

Regular verbal participation in group discussions is crucial for developing philosophical reasoning skills, which are very closely related to conversational and debate skills. If you are feeling shy in class, come to Office Hours, and let's start talking there. Consistent and thoughtful class participation will boost borderline final grades!

Problem Sets

Problem sets are diverse assignments which prompt you to apply terminology, notation, and concepts from the week's readings and discussions. They may also ask you to defend a view, give an interpretation of the reading, or reconstruct or critique an argument. They may include logic problems, short answer questions (up to 100 or 200 words), and essay questions (up to 600 words). With exception of logic problems, all questions should be answered in clear, elegant, and polished full sentences. When doing interpretive work, provide brief quotations and citations from the text as evidence for your readings.

There are 10 opportunities to submit problem sets over the course of the term. Problem sets are due *by 5pm sharp on Fridays* most weeks while classes are meeting. They should be submitted via email as PDF attachments (file name: "[your name] PS[#].pdf"). *Absolutely NO late problem sets will be accepted*, so please plan accordingly!

You only need to submit 8 problem sets total. But you are welcome to submit more. The lowest grades will be dropped equal to the number of problem sets submitted over 8 (so, if you submit all 10 problem sets, your 2 lowest grades will be dropped). Each problem set is graded out of 10, making up 10% of your final course grade (though some problem sets have optional, tougher extra credit problems). The remaining 20% comes from participation in class discussion.

I highly encourage you to work on problem sets with your peers. You may want to make working groups early in the semester to meet with regularly. But please make sure that the final product represents your own thought. Highly similar answers may be considered plagiarism, and will be reported to the Honor Council.

You'll need to devote considerable time to these most weeks. But, to balance things out, there are no long assignments and the course will be done before the finals period.

Resources

I am happy to discuss problem sets in Office Hours, though I can neither confirm nor deny the answers to straightforward short answer questions or logic problems. If you would like help with the writing component of the problem sets, I encourage you to take advantage of the Writing Center. Info: `https://www.haverford.edu/writing-center`. You can easily make an appointment with a writing consultant online.

Academic Stressors, Resources on Campus, and Learning Differences

I am committed to partnering with you on your academic and intellectual journey and recognize that you bring many strengths, perspectives and strategies as you navigate this journey. I encourage you to think proactively and strategically about leveraging these strengths, in partnership with the many resources on campus. These resources include CAPS (free and unlimited counseling is available), Office of Academic Resources, Writing Center, Student Diversity Equity and Access Team, Health Services, Professional Health Advocate, Religious and Spiritual Life, the GRASE Center, and the Advising Deans. At times you may experience challenges or stressors that impact your ability to fully engage intellectually. If the stressors are academic, I welcome the opportunity to discuss and address those stressors with you in order to find solutions together. If you are experiencing challenges or questions related to emotional health, finances, physical health, relationships, learning strategies or differences, or other related topics, I hope you will consider reaching out to the many resources here on campus. Additional information can be found at https://`www.haverford.edu/deans-office-student-life/offices-resources`.

Additionally, Haverford College is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its diverse student body and provides equitable access to students with disabilities. If you have (or think you may have) a disability related to mental health, chronic health, neurological state, and/or physical condition—please contact the Office of Access and Disability Services (ADS) at `hc-ads@haverford.edu`. It is never too late to request ADA accommodations—our bodies and circumstances are continuously changing. Please know that all inquiries and health-related information is handled in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Students who have already been approved to receive academic ADA accommodations and want to use these in this course should share their accommodation letter and make arrangements to meet with me as soon as possible to discuss how their accommodations will be implemented in this course. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice in order to successfully implement.

If, at any point in the semester, a disability or personal circumstances affect your learning in this course, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. I want to be sure you are aware of the full range of resources and options available to you.

It is a state law in Pennsylvania that individuals must be given advance notice that they may be recorded. Therefore, any student who has a disability-related need to audio record this class must first be approved for this ADA accommodation by Access and Disability

Services and then must communicate approval to me. I will then make a general announcement to the class that audio recording may occur while respecting students right to privacy by not identifying the individual(s).

Prohibitions

Cell phones must be silenced and put away during class. I prefer that no laptops be used in the classroom, but understand that there may be good reasons for making exceptions. Please reach out, if you would like to use a laptop. No eating is allowed in the classroom.

Academic Integrity

Any form of cheating, including plagiarism, will be reported to the Honor Council. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism or cheating. Please consult the Honor Code's webpage: `https://honorcouncil.haverford.edu/the-code/`.

To ensure a safe and constructive learning environment for all, please join me in the commitment to respect everyone's identities and rights, regardless of differences.

Schedule

Class 1 (1/22) – Introduction: Meaning and reality

– No reading

Class 2 (1/24) – A purified language of thought

– Gottlob Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, Preface and §§1–4 **FR**: 47–55

– `Optional`: Joan Weiner, *Frege Explained*, Ch 3: "Frege's New Logic" **M**

Class 3 (1/29) – Conditionality, negation, identity

– Frege, *Begriffsschrift* §§5–8 **FR**: 55–65

Class 4 (1/31) – Cancelled due to illness

– No reading

Class 5 (2/5) – Functions, generality

– Frege, *Begriffsschrift* §§9–12 **FR**: 65–74

– `Optional`: Frege, "Function and Concept" **FR**: 130–48

Class 6 (2/7) – *Begriffsschrift* review

– No new reading, but please review *Begriffsschrift* readings

Class 7 (2/12) – Two aspects of meaning: Sense and reference

– Frege, "On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*"   **FR**: 151–71

– `Optional`: Frege, "On Concept and Object"   **FR**: 181–93

Class 8 (2/14) – Cancelled due to research event

– No reading

Class 9 (2/19) – The sense and reference of sentences

– Reread Frege, "On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*"

– `Optional`: Weiner, *Frege Explained*, Ch 6: "Reconception of Logic II"   **M**

– `Optional`: Thomas Ricketts, "Generality, Meaning, and Sense in Frege" (hard!)   **M**

Class 10 (2/21) – The logic of "the"

– Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting"   **M**

– `Optional`: Aloysius Martinich, "Russell, Frege and the Puzzle of Denoting"   **M**

Class 11 (2/26) – The builders

– Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Preface and §§1–20   **PI**: 1–13

– `Optional`: Rush Rhees, "Wittgenstein's Builders"   **M**

Class 12 (2/28) – Pointing, naming, elements

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§21–64   **PI**: 13–35

– `Optional`: Stephen Mulhall, "Reforging Siegfried's Sword: Wittgenstein   **M**
and Anscombe, Wagner and Malory"

Class 13 (3/4) – Games and family resemblance

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§65–91   **PI**: 35–38

– `Optional`: Warren Goldfarb, "Wittgenstein on Fixity of Meaning"   **M**

Class 14 (3/6) – Philosophical therapy

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§92–137   **PI**: 38–59

<div align="center">*** Spring break ***</div>

Class 15 (3/18) – Understanding, meaning, and use

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§138–55   **PI**: 59–67

– Optional: Goldfarb, "Wittgenstein on Understanding"   **M**

Class 16 (3/20) – Reading, being guided

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§156–84   **PI**: 67–80

– Elizabeth Anscombe, "Wittgenstein: Whose Philosopher?"   **M**

Class 17 (3/25) – What is it to follow a rule?

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§185–242   **PI**: 80–95

– Optional: Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*,   **M**
Ch. 2: "The Wittgensteinian Paradox"

Class 18 (3/27) – Continued discussion of rule-following

– Reread §§185–242

– Optional: John McDowell, "Wittgenstein on Following a Rule"   **M**

Class 19 (4/1) – Against a private language

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§243–309   **PI**: 95–110

– Optional: Barry Stroud, "Wittgenstein's 'Treatment' of the Quest for   **M**
'a Language which Describes My Inner Experiences and Which Only I
Myself Can Understand'"

Class 20 (4/3) – Expressing ourselves

– Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, §§310–421   **PI**: 110–33

Class 21 (4/8) – Continued discussion of private language and self-expression

– Reread §§243–421

– Optional: Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*,   **M**
Ch. 3: "The Solution to the 'Private Language' Argument"

<div align="center">*Wittgensteinian Solar Eclipse Party 2:30–4:00 (weather permitting)*</div>

Class 22 (4/10) – A Wittgensteinian lesson for knowledge in general

– John McDowell, "Criteria, Defeasibility, and Knowledge"   **M**

– Optional: John McDowell, "Singular Thought and the Extent of Inner Space"   **M**

Class 23 (4/15) – The social world pervades our minds

– Leda Berio, Kristina Musholt, "How language shapes our minds: On the relationship between generics, stereotypes and social norms"   **M**

Class 24 (4/17) –The psychology of gendered language

– Sabine Sczesny, Magda Formanowicz, Franziska Moser, "Can Gender-Fair Language Reduce Gender Stereotyping and Discrimination?"   **M**

– Marie Gustafsson Sendén, Emma Bäck, Anna Lindqvist, "Introducing a gender-neutral pronoun in a natural gender language: The influence of time on attitudes and behavior"   **M**

Class 25 (4/22) – Slurs are what they do

– Robin Jeshion, "Slurs, Dehumanization, and the Expression of Contempt"   **M**

Class 26 (4/24) – The language of anti-Black racism

– David Burgest, "The Racist Use of the English Language"   **M**

– Optional: Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, Ch. 1: "The Black Man and Language"   **M**

– Optional: Tom Smith, "Changing Racial Labels"   **M**

Class 27 (4/29) – Using language for liberation

– Audre Lorde, "The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action"   **M**

– bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, Ch. 11: "Teaching New Worlds/New Words"   **M**

– Alexander Cheves, "9 LGBTQ+ People Explain How They Love, Hate, and Understand the Word 'Queer'"   **M**

– Optional: Queer Nation, "Queers Read This"   **M**

Class 28 (5/1) – Linguistic challenges for improving our language

– Katherine Ritchie, "Essentializing Language and the Prospects for Ameliorative Projects"   **M**

– Optional: Emily Ladau, "What Should You Call Me? I Get to Decide: Why I'll Never Identify with Person-First Language"   **M**