The New School, New School for Social Research

WITTGENSTEIN

Professor: Alice Crary (she/her), Spring 2025, GPHI 6121, CRN: 19319

Seminar: T 4-5:50pm, Room D1106 (6 East 16th Street, 11th floor)



A house in Oxford, 2019. Photo credit to Nathaniel Hupert.

PROFESSOR—ALICE CRARY

EMAIL: CraryA@newschool.edu

OFFICE HOURS: Tues 6-7pm and Thurs 2-3pm, at D1115, with Zoom option available. Please sign up for in-person or Zoom meetings here.

TEACHING ASSISTANT—CHEN WEIOUQING

EMAIL: chenw399@newschool.edu, weiouqing.chen@gmail.com

OFFICE HOURS: Tues 7-8pm at D1115 (Alice's Office), with Zoom option available. Please sign up for in-person or Zoom meetings here.

ROLE: Chen will read and comment on response papers; look at and comment on abstracts, outlines, and drafts of responses or final papers; meet to discuss your writings and ideas; hold an option 1hr./weekly discussion session if there is sufficient interest (time, place TBD).

Course Description

This is a seminar will serve as a broad introduction to the philosophy of Wittgenstein, with emphasis on his later writings. In addition to discussing major primary texts, we will discuss the reception of Wittgenstein's philosophy and its continuing importance today for research in different areas of philosophy, above all, but not exclusively, social and political philosophy. Our emphasis will be on two major texts from the so-called "later" portion of Wittgenstein's career: the *Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*. We will consider how these works relate to themes from his early work, the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. We will also sample a selection of further writings and delve into a biography and some of the many insightful commentaries on his oeuvre.

The seminar is structured to equip you to meet the challenges of interpreting Wittgenstein's stylistically appealing but difficult prose, which takes the form of numbered aphoristic remarks, and to make it possible to answer questions such as following: Why has the reception of the philosophy of Wittgenstein been a site of intense controversy? In what sense are Wittgenstein's images of language and mind in tension with the spirit of our time? How does inheriting from Wittgenstein contribute to moral and political thought? Should we follow in the footsteps of influential readers and represent his thought as having a politically conservative bent? Would it instead be appropriate to treat his philosophy as capable of shedding light on radical or liberating social thought?

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able to: (1) Demonstrate a graduate-level mastery of some of Wittgenstein's signature philosophical contributions in *The Philosophical Investigations* and (2) *On Certainty* (3), and of some of the reflections collected in *Culture and Value*, (4) connect them with contemporary discussions in social and political thought; (5) Demonstrate the ability to write a thoughtful, graduate-level paper on relevant exegetical and philosophical issues; (6) Demonstrate a verbal ability to assess and produce textually well-grounded criticisms of commentaries on relevant parts of Wittgenstein's later writings; and (7) Demonstrate the ability to, at a graduate level, whether orally or in writing, explain and defend your own preferred interpretations of passages from relevant parts of Wittgenstein's later writings.

Required texts

You should purchase both *The Philosophical Investigations* and *On Certainty*, preferably in bilingual German-English editions as well as a copy of Ray Monk's biography *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*. These books are easily available both online (e.g., bookshop.org) or in stores. Readings through Week 2 will be made available to you on Canvas, giving you time to obtain texts. You may also find it helpful to own a copy of *Culture and Value*, though that is optional.

- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Philosophical Investigations*, ISBN *978-1405159289*, price new: between $36.00 and $41.00 at different online vendors
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, GEM Anscombe and GH Von Wright, eds., ISBN *978-0061316869*, price new: between $13.00 and $19.54 at different online vendors.
- Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, ISBN *978-0140159950*, price new: between $20.00 and $23.50 at different online vendors

All other required and recommended course readings will be made available on our class Canvas site (under "modules") or will be made available to you if you contact the instructor. If you are an *official* auditor in this class, you will have access to our course Canvas site. If you are an *unofficial* auditor, you will not have access to it. It should be possible to give unofficial auditors electronic access to course materials. If this is your situation, we can discuss arrangements after our first course meeting.

Assessable assignments and seminar grade calculation

All students in the seminar are expected to:

1. Proactively engage in class participation,
2. Read the assigned weekly materials before each seminar meeting, and
3. Complete the following written assignments:
   i. Weekly commentaries. On the first day of class, you will be broken into three groups (A, B, C, and D). Each week students from one group will write brief (c. 500-word) reflections. All reflections will be posted to our Canvas site under "Discussions" by 8am Tuesday. The reflections will be integrated into in-class discussions, so all students should try to read their peers' reflections before class. If you don't feel comfortable sharing your reflections in Canvas, you can submit your reflections to me via email. However, you are encouraged to share your reflections to communicate your thoughts and critiques. Over the course of the semester, each of you will submit three reflections.
   ii. Final paper. Each student will write a paper of roughly 15-18 pages (double-spaced, 12-point, and with reasonable margins) based on their proposal. Final papers are due by noon on, two days after our last seminar meeting.

Weighting of assignments:

1. Weekly commentaries: 15%
2. Final paper 85%

Rubric with the grading system for this course

Grade	Description	Percentage	GPA analog
A	Work of exceptional quality, which meets all stated standards and demonstrates originality and effort	95% - 100%	4.0
A-	Work of very high quality	90% - <95%	3.7
B+	Work of high quality, demonstrating a higher than average achievement	87% - <90%	3.3
B	Very good work; satisfies the goals of the course	83% - <87%	3.0
B-	Average work; average understanding of course material	80% - <83%	2.7
C+	Below average work; understanding of course material	77% - <80%	2.3
C	Acceptable work; passable	73% - <77%	2.0
C-	Passable work but below good academic standing	70% - <73%	1.7
D	Well below good academic standing	60% - <70%	1.0
F	Failure, no credit	0% - <60%	0

Reaching me

My contact information is at the top of the first page of this syllabus. There you will find information about my office hours. Please make sure to sign up for the appointment slot that you

want. All appointments are in person, with Zoom options available. If your schedule does not fit with my regular office hours, email me to make an alternative arrangement. You should feel free to contact me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. I will respond as promptly as I can.

Fairness, grading methods, and disputes

Implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic settings, putting members of underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is anonymous assessment. But this doesn't work well in small seminars in which I will be familiar with your research interests and projects. A second strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to interactions in the classroom (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, I will monitor my practice with an eye to fairness. A third strategy is to get anonymous feedback on pedagogy and methods well before the end of the course. I will administer an anonymous survey before the middle of the term to make improvements in the running of the course.

If you believe that there is something amiss with the evaluation of your work, I urge you to let me know. I am open to discussion and to arranging for papers to be re-read.

University-wide course-policies and resources

Academic integrity

Compromising your academic integrity may lead to serious consequences, including (but not limited to) one or more of the following: failure of the assignment, failure of the course, academic warning, disciplinary probation, suspension from the university, or dismissal from the university. Students are responsible for understanding the University's policy on academic honesty and integrity and must make use of proper citations of sources for writing papers, creating, presenting, and performing their work, taking examinations, doing research, and using Artificial Intelligence. It is the responsibility of students to learn the procedures specific to their discipline for correctly and appropriately differentiating their own work from that of others. The full text of the policy, including adjudication procedures, is found here.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own, in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc.), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, Internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or "outsourcing" of written assignments for a course. It also includes material produced partly or wholly by generative artificial intelligence (AI). Essays or responses that are partly or wholly generated by software such as ChatGPT count as plagiarized. (For a further comment on uses of generative AI systems, see below.) Submission of the same work or substantially overlapping material for different assignments without prior instructor approval is plagiarism. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the 8th edition of the MLA Handbook, pages 6-10. The University Learning Center provides resources and workshops to help students understand and avoid plagiarism. Resources regarding what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and additional information about the services provided by the Learning Center can be found on their website.

Student conduct in the online learning environment

Students should familiarize themselves with the Student Code of Conduct and other policies that govern continued enrollment. Contact your Student Advisor for division-specific policies relevant to

your degree. This class is a collective learning environment and will entail sharing and discussing beliefs, opinions, and thoughts on a spectrum of issues, including sensitive topics. Indeed, a productive and flourishing class-dynamic depends on such exchanges. And while we might not always agree, we should nevertheless remain respectful and courteous to one another in any format of exchanging ideas—online discussions, commenting on posts, and in giving feedback and asking questions. It is important to emphasize that the critical exchange of ideas doesn't have to be contentious or combative. We should refrain from impolite, offensive, and rude behavior.

Attendance

Please note that seminar attendance is mandatory**.** According to the University Attendance Policy, habitual absences may justify some grade reduction. For this class, four or more unexcused absences while actively registered will begin to affect your final grade for the course. Please keep me updated should any difficulties arise and make sure to understand the seminar policy regarding the difference between "excused" and "unexcused" absences.

Further university-wide policies

All students should be aware of the following further university policies: the policy on intellectual property rights, the Title IX policy, and TNS grading policy. You should also be aware of and act in the spirit of the university pledge or Narwhal pledge.

Other Relevant Resources

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

- University Libraries and Archives, including Reserves
- The University Learning Center is a good resource for all
- Student Disability Services
  If you are a student with a disability/disabled student or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact the Student Disability Services (SDS) at studentdisability@newschool.edu, or 212-229-5626, to coordinate all reasonable accommodation requests.
- The New School Food Assistance
- Health and Wellness
- The Student Ombuds Office: This office provides assistance to students in resolving conflicts, disputes, or complaints on an informal basis. This office is independent, neutral, and confidential.
- Office of Financial Aid: Visit this webpage to set up a meeting with a FA counselor. Eligible students may be considered for different types of financial aid such as scholarships, federal grants, federal work study and federal student loans. To be considered for federal student aid, you will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) available online at fafsa.gov. The New School's priority deadline to submit the FAFSA is February 15. The FAFSA needs to be submitted annually.
- Student Bill of Rights

Student Course Ratings/Course Evaluations

During the last two weeks of the semester, students are asked to provide feedback for each of their courses through an online survey. They cannot view grades until providing feedback or officially declining to do so. Course evaluations are a vital space where students can speak about the learning experience. It is an important process which provides valuable data about the successful delivery and support of a course or topic to both the faculty and administrators. Instructors rely on course rating surveys for feedback on the course and teaching methods, so they can understand what aspects of the class are most successful in teaching students, and what aspects might be improved or changed in future. Without this information, it can be difficult for an instructor to reflect upon and improve teaching methods and course design. In addition, program/department chairs and other administrators review course surveys. Instructions are available online here.

Use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools

This course aims to provoke you to think for yourself and to make independent critical judgments. It is for this reason that you are not permitted to use generative AI tools to produce, partly or wholly, any of your required assignments (see the comment on plagiarism, above). *Using these tools to produce your assignments, partly or wholly, would defeat the very purpose of the course.* It is possible to find ways of interacting with these tools as a strategy for stimulating your own thinking, for instance, by attempting to assess and improve on the answers such tools give to course-related questions. But there are many other ways to challenge yourself, and reliance on the tools even in these permissible ways—except where unavoidable (e.g., online searches) is not encouraged. Among other things, bear in mind that the use of the tools is not carbon neutral.

A final comment on course readings

The readings for this course may change, so you should pay attention to changes announced in class. The readings may be changed to reflect interests of seminar participants. They may also be adjusted to be more manageable. A fair bit is listed on the schedule (see below) for many of our class meeting. As we proceed, I will make suggestions about where to focus attention. I will identify an easily readable required reading or set of readings before every class meeting. Sometimes this will involve treating portions of what is list as "required" on the schedule as merely recommended. (Any readings listed as "other resources" for specific classes are optional and, as the label suggests, represent further resources for anyone interested in exploring a particular topic more deeply.)

Tentative schedule of readings and assignments

Week One—Introduction, Wittgenstein's life, the *Tractatus*

T, September 1

No required reading

You may find it helpful to read Norman Malcolm, "A Memoir" (in his *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*), the first chapter of Ray Monk's *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, and the Preface to Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

Everyone will be assigned to one of four groups for responses

Some useful reference points

Cora Diamond, "Throwing Away the Ladder"
PMS Hacker, "Was He Trying to Whistle It?"
Peter Winch, "The Unity of Wittgenstein's Philosophy"

Week Two—The opening of the *Investigations*

T, September 8

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 1-32 and 65-67
Warren Goldfarb, "I Want You to Bring me a Slab"

Chapters 2-3 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP A Reflection 1

Other resources

Stanley Cavell, *Philosophical Passages*, "Notes and Afterthoughts on the Opening of the *Investigations*"
Rush Rhees, "Wittgenstein's Builders" in *Discussions of Wittgenstein*
Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 33-64 and 68-85

Note—no class on T, September 15—I will be away

Week Three—Wittgenstein's conception of philosophical method

T, September 22

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 89-133
Stanley Cavell, "The Availability of Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy" in *Must We Mean What We Say?*

Chapters 4-5 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP B Reflection 1

Other resources

Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy"
Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and* The Philosophical Investigations, Chapter 1
Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 86-88 and 134-142
Wittgenstein, "The Big Typescript," sections 86-93

Week Four—Rule-following

T, September 29

Required reading

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 139-141 and 143-202
Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Meaning and Rules*, "The Wittgensteinian Paradox"
John McDowell, "Meaning and Intentionality in Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy"

Chapters 6-7 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

Group C Reflection 1

Other resources

Cora Diamond, "Rules: Looking in the Right Place"
John McDowell, "Non-cognitivism and Rule-following"
Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 203-220 and 499-500

Week Five—Privacy considerations

T, October 6

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 243-270

~~John McDowell, "One Strand in the Private Language Argument"~~

Stephen Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language*, Ch1

Chapters 8-9 of Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP D Reflection 1

Other resources

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, Part II, excerpt

Stephen Mulhall, *Wittgenstein's Private Language*, Ch4

Week Six—Rethinking the inner and the outer

T, October 13

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 271-315, 536-537

Chapters 10-11 of Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP A Reflection 2

Other resources

Stanley Cavell, "Between Avoidance and Acknowledgment," pp.370-383, in *The Claim of Reason*

Marie McGinn, "Privacy and Private Language," Chapter 4 of *Routledge Guidebook to Wittgenstein's* Philosophical Investigations

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, Part II sections i-iii, v-x and xii-xiv

Wittgenstein, *Investigations,* remainder of Part I, *Lectures on Philosophical Psychology, 1946–1947*, sections 281– 282, and *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. 1, sections 448–450

Week Seven—Seeing-as (or: reconsidering perception)

T, October 20

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Investigations*, sections 398-402 and Part II, sections iv and xi

P.F. Strawson, "Imagination and Perception" in *Freedom and Resentment and Other Essays*

Chapters 12-13 of Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP B Reflection 2

Other resources

Stephen Mulhall, *Inheritance and Originality*, sections 42-50.

Week Eight—The staging of *On Certainty*

T, October 27

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 1-25
G.E. Moore, "A Defense of Common Sense"

Chapters 14-15 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP C Reflection 2

Other resources

Annalisa Coliva, "G.E. Moore: Skepticism, Certainty and Commonsense" in *Moore and Wittgenstein*
Norman Malcolm, "The Groundlessness of Religious Belief"
Marie McGinn, Chapter 1 of *Sense and Certainty*

Week Nine—Competing approaches to *On Certainty*

T, November 3

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty,* sections 26-250
James Conant, "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use"

Chapters 16-17 of Ray Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP D Reflection 2

Other resources

Annalisa Coliva, "Wittgenstein: Belief, Knowledge and Certainty" in *Moore and Wittgenstein*
Alice Crary, "Wittgenstein and Ethics: a discussion in reference to *On Certainty*" in Daniele Moyal-Sharrock and William Brenner, eds., *Readings of Wittgenstein's* On Certainty
Martin Kusch, "Wittgenstein's *On Certainty* and Relativism"

Week Ten—*On Certainty* and democratic community

T, November 10

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 251-450

Chapters 18-19 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP A Reflection 3

Other resources

Stanley Cavell, "The Conversation of Justice," Ch3 of *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome*
James Tully, "Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy: Understanding Practices of Critical Reflection"
Linda Zerilli, "The Problem of Democratic Persuasion," Ch6 of *A Democratic Theory of Truth*

Week Eleven—Wittgenstein, persuasion, and rationality

T, November 17

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *On Certainty*, sections 451-676

Chapters 20-21 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP B Reflection 3

Other resources

Cora Diamond, "Anything but Argument?"
Stephen Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal*, Chapter 1
Onora O'Neill, "The Power of Example"
Wittgenstein, "Frazer's *Golden Bough*," selections
Peter Winch, "Persuasion"

Week Twelve—Wittgenstein and Critique I

Time TBA

Required materials

Alice Crary and Joel de Lara, Chs1 and 2 of *The Political Wittgenstein* ("Allegations of Conservativism" and "Reports of Relativism")

Chapters 22-23 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP C Reflection 3

Other resources

Ernst Gellner, *Words and Things: A Critical Account of Linguistic Philosophy and a Study of Ideology*, Chapter 1
Herbert Marcuse, Ch7 of *The One-Dimensional Man* ("The Triumph of Positive Thinking: One-Dimensional Philosophy")
Norman Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*"
Richard Rorty, "Solidarity or Objectivity"
Peter Winch, "Understanding a Primitive Society"

Week Thirteen—Wittgenstein and Critique II

T, November 24

Required materials

Alice Crary and Joel de Lara, Chs 3 and 4 of *The Political Wittgenstein* ("Liberating Motifs" and "Critique and Democratic Community")

Chapters 24-25 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

GROUP D Reflection 3

Other resources

Stanley Cavell, "Aesthetic Problems of Modern Philosophy"
Cora Diamond, "The Difficulty of Philosophy and the Difficulty of Reality"
Chantall Mouffe, "Wittgenstein, Political Theory, and Democracy," online at https://red.pucp.edu.pe/ridei/files/2011/08/081119.pdf, 2000
Iris Murdoch, "A House of Theory"
James Tully, Ch4 of *A Strange Multiplicity* ("The historical formation of common constitutionalism: the rediscovery of cultural diversity, part I")
Linda Zerilli, Conclusion of *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* ("Judging as Democratic World-Building Practice")

Week Fourteen —Critique and Culture

T, December 1

Required materials

Wittgenstein, *Culture and Value*, through page 70 (or perhaps 100)

Chapters 26-27 of Monk, Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius

Other resources

At the discretion of the seminar

Week Fifteen —Reflections and Seminar Reception

T, December 8

No required readings—Reflections and reception

Final papers are due by class time, 4pm, Tues, December 8th