

# WITTGENSTEIN

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course website: [danielwharris.com/teaching/38080/](http://danielwharris.com/teaching/38080/)

username: hunter

password: language

## ABOUT THIS COURSE

Wittgenstein is widely seen as the most influential philosopher of the 20th Century. But he is also a divisive figure, and plenty of philosophers think that his influence on philosophy was negative. In this course, we'll try to understand Wittgenstein's work and his place in the history of philosophy. Most of the semester will be taken up by a close reading of *Philosophical Investigations*. But we'll start with several weeks of important background, including an excerpt from Wittgenstein's earlier work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. And we'll end the semester by tracing out some of Wittgenstein's influence into subsequent work.

## WEBSITE AND READINGS

All of the required readings will be available on the course website:

[danielwharris.com/teaching/38080](http://danielwharris.com/teaching/38080)

username: hunter

password: language

We won't be using Blackboard for this course.

## SOME SECONDARY TEXTS

I won't have any of these secondary texts among the required readings, but they might be helpful for making sense of or contextualizing some of what we read:

- Monk, *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*  
(A really great biography of Wittgenstein)
- Doxiadis et al, *Logicomix*  
(A graphic novel about early analytic philosophy, including Wittgenstein)
- McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*  
(One of several decent guides to the book)
- Hacker, *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Philosophy*  
(A good, advanced book about how W fits into the story)

## OUR DISCORD SERVER

I have created a Discord server for our class, which you can get to by clicking on this link:

<https://discord.gg/tfFwDJE657>

I recommend installing the Discord app on your computer and turning on notifications for our server.

Discord is a free tool for group communication. We will use it as a place where you will submit assignments and communicate with me and other members of the class. You must have access to Discord in order to participate in the course.

## COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Participation: 20%

Critical-feedback assignments: 40%

First paper: 15%

Second Paper: 25%

## CRITICAL-FEEDBACK ASSIGNMENTS

You will be expected to submit a critical-feedback assignment by 11:59pm on the night before each class. You will submit it via Discord, in the appropriate channel for that day. For example, for the class on January 30th, you should post it by 11:59pm on January 29th in the #jan30 channel in our Slack workspace.

Your critical feedback should take the form of a paragraph in which you engage critically with the required reading. This could mean several things: You could pose a detailed question about something that confused you or that you found intellectually unsatisfying in the reading. You could propose a reading of what the author means by something, or a series of things, that they say in the text (this is a very good option when we're reading Wittgenstein, who is often cryptic). You could raise an objection to something that you read. Or you could find and link to a piece of research that undermines, adds a further source of support for, or helps us to make sense of something in the reading, and explain how what you're linking to could improve our understanding of the day's text. In general, I will evaluate these assignments by looking for evidence that you have carefully read and thought about the

required readings, including what is confusing or unconvincing about them.

If you have submitted a critical-feedback assignment on time and it meets the required standards, I will mark it as completed in order to indicate that you have completed the assignment and received full credit. (If your assignment is below the standard to receive credit, I will let you know why privately.) I will sometimes respond with written comments, but the main venue in which you should seek responses to your critical feedback is during class discussion.

Part of the purpose of the critical-feedback assignments is to encourage you to read in a critical way, continually asking yourself whether you understand and are convinced by what you are reading, and to articulate whatever skepticism and criticisms you might have of it. It would be a good idea to take notes as you go. A second purpose of the assignment is to encourage you to show up to class prepared to raise questions about and criticisms of the reading. I will sometimes show portions of your feedback on the projector screen and ask you to elaborate on what you said.

There will be approximately 23 of these assignments in total. Each one is worth ~2% of your overall grade in the course. However, I will drop your lowest three grades, so you can miss three before this will affect your grade in the course. In total, these critical-feedback assignments will make up 40% of your grade in the course.

## **PARTICIPATION**

This is a discussion class. Most of each meeting will be taken up by a conversation about that day's required reading. You are expected to arrive to each class having read the text, and prepared to summarize, ask questions about, and critique it during class.

Some of the main readings are very difficult and confusing, and you should expect them to take a long time to read per page. But struggling through the readings is your most important duty in this course. Do not take it lightly.

## **PAPERS**

40% of your grade will be based on two papers that you write during the semester, one due about halfway through the semester and the other due at the end. Your goal in these assignments will be to critically engage in a deeper way with the material that we cover in class, and also with some of the other literature on the topic that you choose.

## **LATE ASSIGNMENT POLICY**

Assignments will lose 10% of their value for every day that they are late.

## **HOW TO CONTACT ME**

Always check the website for information about what to do before each class. Also please turn on notifications for Dis-

cord, and ask questions in the #general channel there that I or the other members of the class might answer. If you have an urgent question or concern, it's best to email me.

## **UPDATE YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS**

It is important that you can regularly receive emails from me. When I email you, I will use whichever email address is listed for you in CUNYfirst. So it is very important that the email listed there is one that you regularly check. If you would like to change the email listed for you in CUNYfirst, it is easy to do so. Just click this link and follow the steps described there:

<http://www.bcc.cuny.edu/campus-resources/bursar/update-your-information/>

This is your responsibility. If you are late with an assignment because an email from me went to the wrong address, you will not receive credit for the assignment.

## **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

## **ADA STATEMENT**

In compliance with the ADA and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational access and accommodations for all its registered students. Hunter College's students with disabilities and medical conditions are encouraged to register with the Office of AccessABILITY for assistance and accommodation. For information and appointment contact the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1214 or call (212) 772-4857 /or VRS (646) 755-3129.

## **POLICY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

In compliance with the CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College reaffirms the prohibition of any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, sexual harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

- a. Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).
- b. All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are also encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123.

CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct Link: <http://www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/la/Policy-on-Sexual-Misconduct-12-1-14-with-links.pdf>

## TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

This schedule will definitely change! Always check what to read on the course website, and don't rely on this.

Mondays	Thursdays
	<b>January 26th Introduction</b>
<b>January 30th A look into the deep end</b> <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> , pp.3–22 (§§1–3)	<b>February 2nd Logicism</b> Joan Weiner: Frege Frege:
<b>February 6th Russell 1</b> Russell, <i>The Problems of Philosophy</i> , chs. 1–3, ch.5	<b>February 9th Russell 2</b> Russell, <i>The Relation of Sense Data to Physics (excerpt)</i> Russell, <i>The Philosophy of Logical Atomism (excerpt)</i>
<b>February 13th No Class</b>	<b>February 16th Back to the Tractatus</b> <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> , pp.3–22 (§§1–3)
<b>February 20th No Class</b>	<b>February 23rd Class Cancelled</b>
<b>February 27th More Tractatus</b> <i>Tractatus</i> , pp.22–31 (§§4–4.1212) and 80–89 (§§6.3–7)	<b>March 2nd Logical Empiricism</b> Carnap, “The elimination of metaphysics through the logical analysis of language”
<b>March 6th Meaning and Use</b> Wittgenstein, <i>The Blue Book (excerpt)</i>	<b>March 9th Language</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§1–21
<b>March 13th Language</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§22–64	<b>March 16th The Nature of Philosophy</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§65–88
<b>March 20th The Nature of Philosophy</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§89–137	<b>March 23rd Rule Following</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§138–170
<b>March 27th Rule Following</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§171–242	<b>March 30th Private Language</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§243–280
<b>April 3rd Inner and Outer</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§281–397	<b>April 6th No Class (Spring Break)</b>
<b>April 10th No Class (Spring Break)</b>	<b>April 13th No Class (Spring Break)</b>
<b>April 17th Seeing-As, etc.</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§398–546	<b>April 20th Final Passages</b> <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§547–693
<b>April 24th Speech-Act Theory</b> J.L. Austin, <i>How to do Things with Words (excerpt)</i>	<b>April 27th Meaning and Use</b> David Lewis, “Languages and Language”
<b>May 1st Kripkenstein</b> Kripke: “Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language”	<b>May 4th Rule Following</b> Millikan: “Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox”
<b>May 8th Private Language</b> Fodor, <i>The Language of Thought (excerpt)</i>	<b>May 11th TBD</b> TBD
<b>May 15th Second Paper Due</b>	