

## Philosophy 4930: Seminar in a Major Philosopher – Wittgenstein Syllabus

PHI 4930

Spring 2025

Tuesdays 11:45 - 1:40

Thursdays 12:50 - 1:40

Matherly Hall 051

### Instructor Information

Chris Dorst

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Office: 312 Griffin-Floyd Hall

Office Hours: T/Th 2:00 - 3:00pm (or by appointment)

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### Course Description

This is an advanced course focusing on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, especially his later work in *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein is widely regarded as one of the most important and influential philosophers of all time, though his work is notoriously challenging to interpret. With that in mind, our main goal will be understanding the text, and its context, as opposed to evaluating it. Along the way, we will address questions in areas such as philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of mathematics. Some such questions include the following:

- What is meaning?
- What is understanding?
- Do we have infallible, direct access to our own mental states?
- In what sense, if any, are our mental states private?
- What is the relation between a name and the thing it refers to?
- What is the difference between following a rule and merely acting in accord with a rule?

At the end of the course, once we have achieved a general understanding of Wittgenstein's methodology and perspective, we will consider some contemporary applications.

### General Education Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Student Learning Objectives: Students in this course will do advanced undergraduate work in philosophy across the following categories, all of which will be assessed via written assignments and participation in discussion.

- *Content*: Students demonstrate fluency in the terminology, concepts, methodologies, and theories used within the discipline.
- *Communication*: Students communicate knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written or oral forms appropriate to the discipline.
- *Critical Thinking*: Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

## Weekly Format

Readings will be assigned for the week rather than for the day. You should plan to do all of the reading before you come to class on Tuesday, and then revisit the reading for Thursday's meeting.

- Monday by 8pm: each student submits discussion questions/thoughts/topics for the week on Canvas.
- Tuesday class: I will give a general overview of the material in the reading for the week, followed by class discussion guided by the submitted questions.
- Thursday class: class discussion guided by submitted questions.

## Required Course Text

*Philosophical Investigations*, by Ludwig Wittgenstein, translated by G. E. M. Anscombe, P. M. S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte. (Please purchase the *fourth edition*, published in 2009, and revised by P. M. S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte, published by Wiley-Blackwell.)

## Academic Honesty

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: 'On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.'"

The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor.

**Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course.**

Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

## Canvas e-Learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>, click the **e-Learning in Canvas** button, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. You can then access the course e-Learning environment by selecting PHI 4930 from the **Courses** pull-down menu at the top of the page. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Please do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

### **Online Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Accommodation for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Counseling and Wellness Center:**

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575

### **University Police Department:**

392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

### **Statement of Inclusion**

The instructor of this course is committed to providing a course and classroom in which diverse students feel welcome, are empowered to engage, and have the opportunity to thrive. Please let me know if there is anything I can do to better support you.

### **Course Requirements**

Discussion Questions: 20%

Participation: 10%

Take-Home Exam 1: 20%

Take-Home Exam 2: 20%

Final Paper: 30%

### **Discussion Questions**

Each student is required to post a discussion question (or thought, or topic) every Monday by 8pm on Canvas (except for the first Monday of the term). These posts should concern the reading assigned for that week, and should demonstrate critical engagement with the material. They will be assigned a grade out of three points based on the level of engagement demonstrated. If your question is relatively simple (e.g. "What is Wittgenstein referring to here?"), submitting a second question can help to demonstrate more engagement.

### **Participation**

Respectful participation is expected of everyone. Each week has assigned readings, which will require critical engagement and reflection. You should come to class prepared to discuss these readings and demonstrate that you have thought critically about them beforehand. Doing so routinely benefits your participation grade.

Since this is a seminar, I will take attendance for every class meeting. You are allowed two unexcused absences, but having three or more will adversely affect your participation grade. Your participation grade constitutes 10% of your overall course grade, and each unexcused absence after the second one results in a deduction of one of those ten percentage points.

Absences may be excused for reasons of health, official UF activities, religious observances, or extenuating personal reasons such as family emergencies. If you have questions about whether something counts as an excused absence, please ask me. You should let me know ASAP if you know that you will be absent on a particular day.

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### **Take-Home Exams**

There will be two take-home exams for this course, due on February 23 and April 6. Each exam will consist of several prompts testing your understanding of the material covered in the readings and class discussions. Students will be asked to choose a subset of these prompts and provide answers of roughly 500 words each. The exam prompts will be provided one week before the due date. *These exams will be open-note, and you may discuss them with other students, but you may not collaborate with other students (or AI) on the preparation of your answers.*

### **Final Paper**

The final paper for this course is due on April 28. It should be an application of Wittgensteinian methodology to a contemporary philosophical debate of your choice. This should be a significant work of roughly 3000-3500 words (12-15 pages) that both explains the contemporary debate in question and then shows how a Wittgensteinian approach might be applied to it.

### **Late and Missing Work**

Late discussion questions submitted by Tuesday at 8pm (i.e. within 24 hours of the deadline) will receive at most one out of the three possible points. Take-Home Exams will lose  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a letter grade for each day that they are late. (For example, if the exam was due on Friday and it would have earned a B+, but you submit it on Saturday, it will earn a B.) I cannot accept late submissions for the Final Paper. Extensions without penalty may be granted in extenuating circumstances, provided that communication about these circumstances is clear and timely.

### **Grading**

The following grade scale will be used to assign final letter grades for the course. See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93=A	A=4.0
92-90=A-	A-=3.67
89-87=B+	B+=3.33
86-83=B	B=3.00
82-80=B-	B-=2.67
79-77=C+	C+=2.33
76-73=C	C=2.00
72-70=C-	C-=1.67
69-67=D+	D+=1.33
66-63=D	D=1.00
62-60=D-	D-=0.67
59-0=E	E=0.00

### **Course Schedule and Readings**

The following is a tentative schedule for the course. Unless otherwise noted, readings are from the course text, *Philosophical Investigations*, described above (other readings are posted on Canvas). On Thursdays I will post a Canvas announcement about the sections that we will focus on for the next week; thus the readings listed here are likely to be inaccurate, and are intended only to give you a rough sense of where we might be at any given point of the course. *Please rely on the official Canvas announcements as the definitive guide to what you should be reading for a given week.*

#### **Week 1: January 14, 16**

- No reading; course introduction and discussion of Logical Atomism

#### **Week 2: January 21, 23**

- Preface, §§1-36

#### **Week 3: January 28, 30**

- §§37-64

#### **Week 4: February 4, 6**

- §§65-100

**Week 5: February 11, 13**

- §§101-142

**Week 6: February 18, 20**

- §§143-180

**Take-Home Exam 1 Due February 23 by 11:59pm (Submit on Canvas)**

**Week 7: February 25, 27**

- §§181-214
- “Crossing Pictures of ‘Determination’ in Wittgenstein’s Remarks on Rule-Following”, Philip Bold (available on Canvas)

**Week 8: March 4, 6**

- §§215-271

**Week 9: March 11, 13**

- §§272-341

**—Spring Break: March 15 - 22—**

**Week 10: March 25, 27**

- §§342-397

**Week 11: April 1, 3**

- §§398-464

**Take-Home Exam 2 Due April 6 by 11:59pm (Submit on Canvas)**

**Week 12: April 8, 10**

- Reading TBD
- April 10: Zoom visit by Philip Bold (University of Minnesota - Twin Cities)

**Week 13: April 15, 17**

- “Wittgenstein’s Legacy - The Principles of the Private Language Arguments”, P. M. S. Hacker (available on Canvas)
- Secondary Reading TBD

**Week 14: April 22**

- Makeup Day

**Final Paper Due April 28 by 11:59pm (Submit on Canvas)**