

PHIL 6100 – Seminar in the History of Philosophy: Frege, Russell, and (Early) Wittgenstein

3014 Moore Hall

Tues., 11:00-1:30

james.v.martin@wmich.edu (3011 Moore Hall, by appointment)

Required Texts: *The Frege Reader* (Beaney)

Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (Wittgenstein)

All other readings will be online at the Elearning site.

Course Description: This course will study the history and methods of analytic philosophy as the subject developed over roughly the first half of the 20th century. We'll do so by examining key texts from Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, some of the earliest authors to consciously employ tools for tackling philosophical problems that will eventually come to characterize work in the analytic tradition. As we're working to understand the particular problems these philosophers are struggling with and the solutions they offer, we'll also be asking more general questions such as, What is the method of "analysis" that these authors hope to make use of? and How must we conceive of philosophical problems if they are to be solvable through a kind of analysis?

Schedule and Readings:

Week 1 Sept. 4 This week will provide an introduction to the course, our methods, and the necessary background in German philosophy, British philosophy, and 19th century mathematics and logic.

[1] Leibniz, Dialogue on the Connection between Things and Words

[2] Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, III.ii, vii (excerpts)

[3] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Introduction

[4] (optional) Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (excerpt)

[1] and [2] present some common views about language from the 17th century that were still prevalent among our authors' contemporaries. [3] contains Kant's descriptions of analyticity and "apriority" that are important for understanding Frege's project. [4] discusses some of the superfluities involved in letting words get their meanings by standing for things in the world.

Week 2 Sept. 11 We'll discuss Frege's main goals and the logical machinery he introduces for the purpose of achieving these goals. This material forms the backbone of Frege's thought and will be refined and corrected in his later work.

[1] Frege, *Begriffsschrift*, Preface through §12

[2] Frege, Logic (c. 1880)

[3] Frege, On the Scientific Justification of a Conceptual Notation

[4] Heijenoort, Logic as Calculus and Logic as Language

[5] (optional) Frege, Letter to Marty (29.8.1882)

[6] (optional) Frege, *Begriffsschrift*

[1] is Frege's first important work: it introduces his concept of judgeable content, the idea of the priority of complete judgments over concepts, his function/argument analysis of content, and gives the first adequate formal treatment of multiple generality in logic. ([6] is the complete version of [1] if you're interested in seeing more of his formal results.) [2] is an unpublished manuscript that outlines some of Frege's basic views about the nature of logic in more detail than we get in the *Begriffsschrift*. [3] discusses some of the benefits a "concept-script" can provide. [4] is a widely-cited piece that attempts to elucidate Frege's conception of the *Begriffsschrift* as a language, not a mere calculus. [5] is a letter to a rare sympathetic colleague in which Frege attempts to explain his system and its worth.

Week 3 Sept. 18 Frege's second major work, *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (often referred to as the *Grundlagen*), attempts to carry out—in natural language—the “logicist” project, which Frege had begun in the *Begriffsschrift*, of showing that arithmetic is ultimately derivable from logical laws. (The formal version of Frege's investigations is presented in his *Basic Laws of Arithmetic*.) We'll discuss the successes and failures of the work as we continue to get clearer about Frege's developing picture of language and thought.

[1] Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*, Intro., §§1-4, 45-69, 87-91, 105-109

[2] Frege-Russell, Correspondence (16.6.1902, 22.6.1902)

[3] (optional) Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*

[1] puts the ideas of the *Begriffsschrift* to work as it introduces three important principles guiding Frege's thought, including his famous “context principle.” It also analyzes ordinary-language number statements, suggesting that they make claims about concepts, and offers a definition of the natural numbers apparently based solely logical principles. [2] contains Russell's letter to Frege recounting his discovery of “Russell's paradox” as well as Frege's thunderstruck reply. [3] again provides the complete text of the *Grundlagen* in case you want to further explore any of its sections.

Week 4 Sept. 25 Frege's next major work, ‘On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*,’ introduces his well-known distinction between sense and reference. We'll attempt to determine what needs led him to this distinction as well as the implications it has for understanding both his earlier and later work.

[1] Frege, Function and Concept

[2] Frege, On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*

[3] Frege, Letter to Husserl (24.5.1891)

[4] (optional) Frege, Comments on *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*

[5] (optional) Frege, Introduction to Logic

[6] (optional) Dummett, Was Frege a Philosopher of Language?

[1] contains the first mention of the sense/reference distinction in Frege's work. [2] is taken to be his definitive exposition of the distinction and its consequences. [3] tries to clarify the distinction for Husserl with a simple diagram. [4] discusses the sense/reference distinction in relation to concept words, which had been left under-

explored in [2]. [5] contains some later reflections of the distinction from one of Frege's many unsuccessful attempts to write a logic textbook. [6] is a piece discussing the question of how one should think about Frege in relation to language from one of the most influential Frege scholars.

Week 5 Oct. 2 This week we'll discuss what most people consider to be Frege's final significant work. In it, we see more of Frege's thinking about truth and logic as well as some brief reflections on empiricism, skepticism, and indexicals.

[1] Frege, Thought

[2] Frege, Logic (1897)

[3] (*optional*) Frege, 17 Key Sentences on Logic

[4] (*optional*) Tarski, The Semantic Conception of Truth

[5] (*optional*) Perry, Frege on Demonstratives

[1] is the main text for this week, with [2] being an earlier piece discussing many of the same themes (of particular interest are Frege's views about truth and its indefinability as well as its role in determining the subject matter of logic). These ideas are further reduced to a core of "key sentences" in [3]. [4] is the foundation for modern definitions of truth in logic, which appear to be in conflict with Frege's conclusions and to be working with a quite different conception of logic. [5] is an important piece elaborating on and raising problems for the portion of [1] dealing with demonstratives

Week 6 Oct. 9 This week we'll move on to discuss Russell as a second important contributor to the early analytic tradition and, perhaps most significantly, to the work of the young Wittgenstein. We'll begin by looking at Russell's criticisms of Frege's doctrines as well as his criticisms of Meinong, whose views Russell had earlier found to be attractive.

[1] Russell, On Denoting (bottom of p. 482 to top of p. 488)

[2] Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, Appx. A

[3] Russell-Frege, Correspondence (12.12, 28.12.1902; 20.2, 21.5.1903)

[4] (*optional*) Meinong, The Theory of Objects

[5] (*optional*) Gray, Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard

[1] contains Russell's critique of Frege's sense reference distinction, including (what many have found to be) the puzzling "Gray's *Elegy* argument." [2] is Russell's exposition of Frege and a critique of some of his views authored soon after learning about Frege's work. [3] contains a back-and-forth between Russell and Frege over the sense reference distinction. [4] is a long, and surprisingly commonsensical, text expounding the ideas of one of philosophy's most infamous authors. [5] provides the text of Gray's poem.

Week 7 Oct. 16 Having criticized Frege for his doctrine of sense and reference with regard to both names and sentences, we'll begin to see how Russell attempts to do without in more detail. This week try to come to grips with how Russell tries to get by without Frege's notion of a thought as the sense of a sentence and as a truth-value as its referent.

- [1] Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chs. 12 & 13
- [2] Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Lect. 1
- [3] Moore, *The Nature of Judgment*
- [4] (optional) Russell, *On Propositions: What They Are and How They Mean*

[1] is a presentation of Russell's early form of so-called logical atomism. These basic ideas are presented again in [2] after some inspiration from his interactions with the young Wittgenstein in Cambridge. [3] is an early piece by G.E. Moore, another important figure in the history of early analytic philosophy, that presents a theory of judgment that influenced Russell and also has close connections with ideas independently arrived at by Frege. [4] is another, even later, account of facts (including negative facts) and propositions from Russell.

Week 8 Oct. 23 Continuing on with our study of Russell, we'll look in more detail at Russell's attempt to use his definite descriptions to do without Frege's senses.

- [1] Russell, *On Denoting*
- [2] Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Lect. 2
- [3] Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Ch. XVI
- [4] Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Ch. 5

The full text of [1] contains Russell's first presentation of the theory of descriptions and an account of the philosophical problems it's supposed to solve. [2] again discusses particulars and our ways of referring to them from Russell's most Wittgenstein-inspired period. [3] contains another slightly later account of the theory of descriptions. [4] discusses Russell's famous distinction between knowledge by acquaintance vs. knowledge by description, which is closely tied to his work on the theory of descriptions.

Week 9 Oct. 30 This week will be a general look at some of Russell's thoughts about logic, mathematics, and epistemology that connect with the doctrines of his and Frege's we have been investigating.

- [1] Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World*, Lect. II
- [2] Russell, *What is Logic?*
- [3] Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Ch. XVIII
- [4] Russell, *On the Nature of Acquaintance*
- [5] (optional) Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, Ch. 1
- [6] (optional) Russell, *Principles of Mathematics*, Ch. 11

[1] contains one of Russell's major reflections on the use of logic in philosophy as well as the analytical approach to the subject. [2] is one of Russell's only attempts to try to say what logic is exactly and what distinguishes it from mathematics (if anything). In [3], Russell further addresses the relation between mathematics and logic. [4] elaborates on the "acquaintance" relation, which Russell takes to play a role in our understanding the logical constants and seeing the truth of certain logical truths. [5] offers another definition of pure mathematics, and [6] provides Russell's definition of the cardinal numbers, which can be compared with Frege's given in the *Grundlagen*.

Week 10 Nov. 6 We now have enough background to proceed to Wittgenstein's early, difficult, and influential work, the *Tractatus*. This text can be seen as an attempt to synthesize and perfect the thought of Frege and Russell and as a particularly pure form of some of the key ideas that drive practitioners of one form of analytic philosophy. We'll start by looking at some of Wittgenstein's criticisms of Frege and Russell and then get into his "picture theory of meaning," which lies at the heart of the *Tractatus*, as well as the metaphysics that supports this theory.

- [1] Wittgenstein, Notes on Logic (excerpt)
- [2] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 4.003-4.0031, 4.111-4.116, 6.53
- [3] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 1-3.144
- [4] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916), pp. 5-9
- [5] Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Ch. 3
- [6] (optional) Herz, *The Principles of Mechanics Presented in a New Form*, §§418-428
- [7] (optional) Anscombe, *An Introduction to Wittgenstein's Tractatus*, Ch. 1
- [8] (optional) Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916)
- [9] (optional) Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (side-by-side edition)

[1] contains some of Wittgenstein's early criticisms of the views of Frege and Russell. [2] are a few of Wittgenstein's reflections of the nature of philosophy as presented in the *Tractatus*. (We'll discuss these views more when we come back to the controversy about how to read the *Tractatus* on Week 13.) [3] lays out the metaphysics of the *Tractatus* as well as outlines the important "picture theory." [4] provides a few of Wittgenstein's early notes on the material covered in [3]. (The complete version of the *Notebooks* and a side-by-side edition of the *Tractatus* including the two main translations and the original German text can be found in [8] and [9] respectively.) [5] is one of the two core chapters of Ray Monk's excellent biography of Wittgenstein. Herz's dynamical models presented in [6] are considered to be an important inspiration for Wittgenstein's picture theory. [7] is an influential introduction to some of the difficult ideas introduced in the early parts of [3] written by one of Wittgenstein's close associates.

Week 11 Nov. 13 This week we continue to attempt to come to grips with the *Tractatus* by looking at its view of naming and truth. Wittgenstein will reject key portions of Russell's and Frege's theories, but will retain a familiar-sounding context principle of his own.

- [1] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 3.2-3.261, 3.3, 4.026-4.031
- [2] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916), selections
- [3] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.062-4.063, 6.111-6.1201
- [4] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916), pp. 24-26
- [5] Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius*, Ch. 4
- [6] (optional) Ishiguro, Use and Reference of Names

[1] and [2] contain the most important sections of the *Tractatus* and Wittgenstein's notes on naming, what can be named, and his version of the context principle. [3] and [4] similarly provide the key portions of his thinking about the internal connection between propositions and truth. [5] is the second central chapter of the Monk biography. [6] is an influential take on the way names work in the *Tractatus*.

Week 12 Nov. 20 No Class: Thanksgiving Break

Week 13 Nov. 27 This week we'll discuss some of the most influential ideas to come out of the *Tractatus*: Wittgenstein's account of logic and the logical constants as well as his distinction between saying and showing. We'll also discuss the question of sense and nonsense and how to read the *Tractatus*, which has been a hotly debated subject for the past twenty years or so.

[1] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 4.116-4.1212, 5-6.13

[2] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916), selections.

[3] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Preface, 2.17-2.182, 3.262, 4.02, 4.027, 4.113-4.128, 6.521-7

[4] Wittgenstein, Notes Dictated to G.E. Moore in Norway

[5] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Preface, 3.24, 4.003, 4.0312-4.53, 5.132, 5.473, 5.5303, 5.5351, 5.5422, 5.5571, 6.51, 6.54

[6] (optional) Hacker, Was He Trying to Whistle It?

[1] and [2] provide Wittgenstein's main thoughts about logic from this time period. [3] and [4] are important texts for trying to get a clear understanding of the distinction between saying and showing and its role in Wittgenstein's work. The passages in [5] all deal with the distinction between sense and nonsense. [6] is a piece by one major Wittgenstein scholar discussing how to read the *Tractatus* and criticizing some recent approaches to the work.

Week 14 Dec. 4 For our final meeting, we'll discuss some of the remaining surprising views expressed in the *Tractatus*. In particular, we'll look at Wittgenstein's thinking about ethics and the mystical as well as his cryptic remarks about solipsism.

[1] Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 5.6-5.641, 6.37-7

[2] Wittgenstein, *Notebooks* (1914-1916), selections

[3] Wittgenstein, A Lecture on Ethics

[4] Williams, Wittgenstein and Idealism

[5] (optional) Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, v. 1, §66

[6] (optional) Tolstoy, The Three Hermits

[1] contains the main passages in which Wittgenstein offers his views on the mystical and the ethical. (Despite the brevity of these remarks, Wittgenstein took them to be very important. His family, perhaps having appreciated the importance of this portion of the work, apparently referred to the *Tractatus* as "Uncle Ludwig's book on ethics.") [2] contains the *Notebooks* versions of many passages in [1], sometimes with some useful elaboration. [3] is a lecture on ethics given by Wittgenstein in Cambridge in 1930. [4] is a piece by Bernard Williams discussing Wittgenstein's remarks on solipsism and also connecting them to some of his later writings. [5] is a passage from Schopenhauer, who Wittgenstein had read as a young man, discussing something like "the world of the happy man" vs. the world of the unhappy man. [6] is one of Tolstoy's stories that Wittgenstein claimed to contain the heart of a certain kind of ethics. (Wittgenstein used to give his friends copies of Tolstoy's *Twenty-Three Tales* with this story and a few others highlighted.)

Assignments:

Participation	10%	Regular attendance and participation is expected	
Paper Preparation	10%	Paper-topic proposal and bibliography	Due: Nov. 27
Précis	10%	Précis of recent article dealing with one of our authors	Due: Nov. 27
Final Paper	70%	~20 page seminar paper	Due: Dec. 7

Accommodations: Any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact me and the appropriate Disability Services office at the beginning of the semester. The two disability service offices on campus are: Disabled Student Resources and Services (269) 387-2116 and the Office of Services for Students with Learning Disabilities (269) 387-4411.

Academic Honesty: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the university's [policies and procedures](#) that pertain to Academic Honesty. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with me if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment.

Grading: The grading for this course will be based on the following scale.

A	[92.5, 100]
BA	[87.5, 92.5)
B	[82.5, 87.5)
CB	[77.5, 82.5)
C	[72.5, 77.5)
DC	[67.5, 72.5)
D	[60, 67.5)
E	[0, 60)