

The *Tractatus* and Early Analytic Philosophy

Phil1290: Topics in the History of Philosophy

Class: Tuesdays, 6-8.30pm, 130 CL
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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is a major foundational text in analytic philosophy. It was read line by line by the members of the "Vienna Circle"—a group of the leading philosophers, scientists and mathematicians of the early twentieth century—and it remains an inspirational, puzzling, and deeply controversial text today. This course aims to give you the resources to begin to interpret the *Tractatus* for yourself. You will explore the rich historical and philosophical background of early analytic philosophy, and by doing so you will gain a critical understanding of major topics in contemporary debates.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

There are three *assessment strands* embedded in this course: **historical analysis**, **logical analysis**, and **philosophical analysis**. A grading rubric is provided at the end of this syllabus. Your final grade for the course will reflect your ability to demonstrate these skills verbally and in your written work. There will be six *formative assessments*, two in each assessment strand. (See "Formative Assessments", below.) These are designed so that you can develop the relevant skills over time and receive feedback throughout the semester. Collectively, they will contribute a minimum of 15% and a maximum of 30% towards your final grade. At the end of the course you will give an oral presentation, contributing 30% towards your final grade, and submit a final paper, contributing up to 45%. Thus your final grade will be calculated as follows:

Attendance and Participation:	10%
Formative Historical Assessment:	5-10%
Formative Logical Assessment:	5-10%
Formative Philosophical Assessment:	5-10%
Final Presentation:	30%
Final Paper:	30-45%

If your performance during the semester is particularly good then the formative assessments will carry more weight, and if your performance at the end of the semester is particularly good then the final paper will carry more weight.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

CONTENT-BASED:

1. A critical understanding of some key texts, and hence some key ideas, of early analytic philosophy.
2. Knowledge of the historical context, including the personalities involved, their interaction with each other, and their broader social and political context.
3. An appreciation of this period of philosophy within broader philosophical and intellectual traditions.

SKILLS-BASED:

1. **Historical Analysis:** Ability to summarize and relate pertinent historical information relating to a particular figure, text or idea. Ability to critically evaluate the reliability and scope of historical sources or other evidence.
2. **Logical Analysis:** Ability to translate between arguments expressed in colloquial language and a symbolic language. Ability to use formal logic to evaluate the validity of arguments. Ability to employ symbolic languages and formal tools when reasoning.
3. **Philosophical Analysis:** Ability to explain and critique complex philosophical arguments. Ability to present arguments and ideas—both orally and in written work—in a way that is balanced and well-researched, and also succinct, interesting and persuasive.

Throughout this course you will be developing the fundamental skills of an academic philosopher. Your final presentation and paper are designed with this in mind. An overarching ambition is for you to be in a position to submit your work to a genuine philosophy conference. I will direct you to “calls for papers”, and encourage you to apply.

TEXTS

1. Doxiadis and Papadimitriou, “Logicomix: An Epic Search for Truth” **(required)**
Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2015. ISBN: 978-9608399679
2. Sullivan, “Logicism and the Philosophy of Language” (L&PoL) **(required)**
Broadview Press, 2003. ISBN: 978-1551114712
3. Wittgenstein, “Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus” (TLP) **(recommended)**
Humanities Press International, 1992. ISBN: 978-0391036086

Note that the following versions of the *Tractatus* are available online:

(1) A pdf of the first English translation (and the original German text):
http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5740?msg=welcome_stranger

(2) The German text and both English translations printed side-by-side:
<https://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/>

(3) Two hyperlinked editions:

(a) <http://www.kfs.org/jonathan/witt/ten.html>

(b) <http://www.tractatuslogico-philosophicus.com/>

(4) The University of Iowa “Tractatus map”:
<http://tractatus.lib.uiowa.edu/tlp/>

SCHEDULE

9th January.

By January 23rd, please read Logicomix and TLP

16th January.

1. L&PoL pp. 15-19 (I Overview)

2. “Aristotle, “On Interpretation” (§1) [online]

Optional: IEP entry and SEP entry on the “square of opposition”. [online]

23rd January.

1. L&PoL pp. 19-31 (II Philosophical Background)

2. TLP (especially 6.3s, 6.4s, 6.5s, 7)

3. Logicomix

Historical Assessment 1: One passing reference

30th January.

1. L&PoL pp. 31-45 (III The Logician Thesis)

2. Frege, “Begriffsschrift” (Introduction)

3. Frege, “On the Scientific Justification of a Conceptual Notation”

6th February.

1. Frege, “Function and Concept”

2. Frege, “Begriffsschrift” (§§1-12)

Logical Assessment 1: Frege’s *Begriffsschrift*

13th February.

1. L&PoL pp. 45-60 (IV(i)-(ii) Philosophical Logic)
2. Frege, "The Foundations of Arithmetic" (Introduction)
3. Frege, "Concept and Object"

20th February.

1. L&PoL pp. 67-75 (V(i) Meaning: Semantic Monism and Semantic Dualism)
2. Frege, "On Sense and Reference"

Philosophical Assessment 1: Reconstructing an argument

27th February. [Library Day]

1. TLP (especially 4.1s)

**** 6th March. Spring break ****

13th March.

1. Garfield, "What is *Buddhist Philosophy*?" [a PDF of this text will be provided]

Historical Assessment 2: An annotated bibliography

20th March.

1. L&PoL pp. 75-82 (V(ii) Logical Form: On Denoting)
2. Russell, "On Denoting"

27th March.

1. Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description"

Philosophical Assessment 2: A philosophical introduction

3rd April.

1. Russell, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism" (1918), Lectures 1 and 2

10th April.

1. TLP (especially 1s, 2s, 4.0s, and the end of the book)

Logical Assessment 2: The logical notation of the *Tractatus*

**** 17th April. Final Presentations ****

**** 24th April. Final Presentations ****

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENTS

Historical Assessment 1: One passing reference

2 page take-home

The book that we begin with, “Logicomix”, is packed with historical details. For this assessment, I will ask you to choose one passing reference to a figure, event or idea, carry out independent research, and write a brief summary of your findings. (We will talk through this in class before you submit this assessment.)

Logical Assessment 1: Frege’s *Begriffsschrift*

In-class test

This will be a short assessment in which you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of Frege’s logical notation. (We will work through examples together in class prior to this assessment, and you will have plenty of time to practice both individually and in groups.)

Philosophical Assessment 2: Reconstructing an argument

2-3 page take-home

A fundamental aspect of philosophical writing is to be able to charitably reconstruct an argument of another philosopher. This allows you to first demonstrate your own level of understanding, and then challenge the argument in a convincing and targeted way.

Historical Assessment 2: An annotated bibliography

2 page take-home

Many of the readings for this class are collected together in “Logicism and the Philosophy of Language” (L&PoL). However, using a reader such as this can obscure the historical background of these texts. For this assessment I will ask you to consider questions like the following—When, exactly, were these works written? Were they published by the author, or in the author’s lifetime? If they are translated, who translated them? I will ask you to carry out independent research on three articles in L&PoL, and write a brief summary of your findings.

Philosophical Assessment 2: A philosophical introduction

2-3 page take-home

Writing an introduction is an important aspect of philosophical writing. An introduction should include a concise statement of your objectives and also capture your reader’s interest. Use this assessment to start thinking about your final paper.

Logical Assessment 2: The logical notation of the *Tractatus*

In-class test

This will be a short assessment in which you will have the opportunity to demonstrate your mastery of Wittgenstein’s logical notation. (We will work through examples together in class prior to this assessment, and you will have plenty of time to practice both individually and in groups.)

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, noted below, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz, exam or paper will be imposed. (For the full Academic Integrity policy, go to www.provost.pitt.edu/info/ai1.html.)

DISABILITY RESOURCE SERVICES

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, as early as possible in the term. Disability Resources and Services will verify your disability and determine reasonable accommodations for this course.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATION POLICY

Each student is issued a University e-mail address (username@pitt.edu) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their pitt.edu address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on **Edit Forwarding Addresses**, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (For the full E-mail Communication Policy, go to www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/09/09-10-01.html.)

TURNITIN

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of Turnitin.com page service is subject to the Usage Policy and Privacy Pledge posted on the Turnitin.com site.

Analytical Philosophy Skills

Historical Analysis	Logical Analysis	Philosophical Analysis
Student has demonstrated the ability to...		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summarize and communicate pertinent historical information accurately (1), clearly (2), insightfully (3), and critically (4). • evaluate the reliability and scope of historical sources (1) accurately (2), clearly (3), and persuasively (4). • employ historical sources as part of an overarching philosophical argument (1) spanning a wide range of materials (2) which gives a balanced view (3) and thereby makes an original contribution (4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • translate between arguments expressed in colloquial language and symbolic language at an introductory level (1), simple level (2), complex level (3), or advanced level (4). • use formal logic to evaluate the validity of introductory (1), simple (2), complex (3), or advanced (4) arguments. • employ symbolic languages and formal tools as part of an overarching philosophical argument at an introductory level (1), simple level (2), complex level (3), or advanced level (4). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reconstruct a philosophical argument accurately (1), clearly (2), charitably (3), and critically (4). • challenge a premise of a philosophical argument (1) clearly (2), persuasively (3), and compellingly (4). • use examples and counter-examples (1) clearly (2), persuasively (3), and compellingly (4). • create an original philosophical argument (1) clearly (2), persuasively (3), and compellingly (4).
(1): C/D range (2): B/C range (3): A/B range (4): A range		