

Professor Elisabeth Camp

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Office Hours: Thursdays 12-1 in person, and by appointment over Zoom

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Course meeting: Mondays and Thursdays 10:20-11:40, Scott Hall 119

Course website: rutgers.instructure.com/courses/189755

Texts

Required: *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. Pears & McGuinness (ISBN 978-0415254083)
Philosophical Investigations, 4th ed., trans. Anscombe, Hacker & Shulte
(ISBN 978-1405159289)

Recommended: Monk: *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (ISBN 978-0140159950)
Doxiadis & Papadimitriou: *Logicomix* (ISBN 978-1596914520)

Course Description

In this class, we will engage in a close reading of Wittgenstein's two major writings: the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Some of the main topics to be discussed include: reality; understanding; how language connects to the world; the relation between language and logic; pain and other feelings; the source of norms and values; what philosophy is and what it can (and cannot!) accomplish.

A distinctive feature of Wittgenstein's overall approach to philosophy is his commitment to philosophy as an activity rather than a set of doctrines. In keeping with this, the main goal of this class is for you to become more skilled at doing philosophy: to learn to read closely, charitably, and critically; to grapple with complex, foundational questions; to write clearly and concisely; and to talk respectfully with others. There will be no lectures or secondary texts. Assessment will be based on participation in class and online discussions, two short (2-3 pp.) papers and one longer (5-7 pp.) paper.

Course Goals

In this course, you will learn to:

- understand some historically and philosophically significant motivations and techniques for constructing formal languages and some of the obstacles facing such construction.
- reflect on the nature of meaning and understanding: their possible sources, varieties, and functions.
- reflect on the nature of philosophy: its utility, risks, and limitations.

My hope is that in the long term – say, five years – you have developed a healthy appreciation of and skepticism for abstract philosophical system-building and argumentation.

In pursuing these course-specific goals, you will also acquire the following general skills:

- the ability to engage in close reading of deeply puzzling texts.
- the ability to articulate clear, structured, well-supported arguments for your own conclusions.
- the ability to engage in respectful, reasoned, and passionate debate with your peers about complex topics that lack clear answers.

Course Requirements

- Class attendance & participation (15% of course grade).
- Weekly forum posts (on Canvas) (15% of course grade).
- One in-class presentation (5% of course grade; additional presentation for extra credit).
- Two short (2-3 page) writing assignments (20% each of course grade).
- A final paper, 5-7 pages (25% of course grade).
- There is NO final exam.

Rutgers University takes academic dishonesty seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Attendance

In this class, we'll work together to read some of the most challenging texts in all of philosophy. The class as a whole depends on your active, collaborative participation. This means you need to do the reading in advance, show up to class on time, pay attention to the class (not your phone!), and engage in a substantive and respectful way with your peers.

You can miss **2 classes** over the course of the semester without providing justification or incurring a penalty. If you need miss a class, use the University absence reporting website: sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/. Let me know by email if you need a religious or other accommodation to miss a class.

Participation

A productive intellectual community depends on good practices for inclusive discussion. Our department's norms for discourse are here: philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/civil-discourse; we will refine and establish more specific in-class policies together on the first day of class.

Your in-class participation will be graded according to the following rubric.

A+	A	B	C	D	F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively supports, engages and listens to peers arrives fully prepared at every session plays an active role in discussions comments consistently advance the level and depth of analysis contributions consistently improve the group dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively supports, engages and listens to peers arrives fully prepared at nearly every session plays an active role in discussions comments typically advance the level and depth of analysis contributions often improve the group dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> makes a sincere effort to interact with peers arrives mostly prepared at most sessions participates constructively in discussions makes relevant comments based on the assigned material contributions often improve (and never harm) the group dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> limited interaction with peers preparation is inconsistent when prepared, participates constructively in discussions when prepared, makes relevant comments based on the assigned material contributions don't affect the group dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> virtually no interaction with peers rarely prepared rarely participates comments are generally vague or ungrounded in the assigned material often displays lack of interest contributions often harm the group dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no interaction with peers never prepared never participates demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material contributions often significantly harm the group dynamic

Study guide and questions

- I have posted a brief study guide and questions for each week's anticipated readings. You do not have to write out or turn in answers to the questions. But you should at a minimum think them through for yourself, and writing short responses may be helpful.

I strongly expect that we will not stick to the schedule below. That's ok! The guides and questions are also organized by week rather than by class. I will edit the Canvas site by Friday morning to specify the assignments for each day of the coming week.

Weekly posts

- Twice each week, by **Sunday** and **Wednesday** at **noon**, everyone will post **one paragraph** to the week's Canvas forum, *posing a question* for discussion. To do that, you need to:
 - a) *do the reading, using the study guide and questions*;
 - b) *ground* your question in a specific passage of the assigned readings;
 - c) *motivate* your question by placing it in the broader context of the text, class, and philosophy.There is **no credit** for late posts. You can **miss or drop 4 posts** over the course of the semester without penalty. Your posts will be graded according to the following rubric.

5	4	3	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates deep, genuine engagement with assigned reading.• promotes focused, substantive, productive discussion.• is substantively grounded in specific passage(s).• demonstrates nuanced understanding of wider textual and philosophical context.• written in a way that is clear, concise, and accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates serious, sincere engagement with assigned reading.• promotes substantive, productive discussion.• is concretely grounded in specific passage(s).• demonstrates substantive understanding of wider textual and philosophical context.• written in a way that is mostly clear, concise, and accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates sincere engagement with assigned reading.• promotes substantive discussion.• is anchored in specific passage(s).• demonstrates substantive engagement with wider textual and philosophical context.• written in a way that is somewhat clear, concise, and accessible.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• narrow or superficial engagement with assigned reading.• provokes discussion without clear payoff.• only indirectly connected to specific passages.• narrow or superficial engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.• written in a way that is imprecise or difficult to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• only superficial engagement with assigned reading.• does not promote relevant discussion.• only tangentially connected to specific passages.• little or no engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.• written in a way that is imprecise or difficult to understand.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• demonstrates no acquaintance with assigned reading.• distracts from productive discussion.• not connected to specific passages.• no engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.• written in an inaccessible way.

- For each class meeting, **one person** will initiate discussion. To do that, you need to:
 - a) *read* all of the posts;
 - b) *synthesize* the posts into 3 to 4 questions;
 - c) *create* a readable **handout** (max 1 page) with **1-sentence questions** and brief motivations.
 - d) *start discussion* of each question (max 3 minutes each).

Your presentation will be graded according to the following rubric.

5	4	3	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout effectively synthesizes and motivates discussion questions. • handout presents questions in an accurate and easily accessible way. • presentation demonstrates deep, genuine engagement with assigned reading. • presentation is concise and engaging. • presentation effectively inaugurates productive discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout substantively synthesizes and motivates discussion questions. • handout presents questions in a mostly accurate and accessible way. • presentation demonstrates genuine engagement with assigned reading. • presentation is fairly concise and/or engaging. • presentation inaugurates productive discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout synthesizes most discussion questions. • handout presents questions in a fairly accurate and accessible way. • presentation demonstrates engagement with assigned reading. • presentation is somewhat engaging, but does not use time in a highly effective way. • presentation inaugurates useful discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout captures some useful discussion questions. • handout presents questions in a somewhat inaccurate way. • presentation demonstrates acquaintance with assigned reading. • presentation is difficult to understand and/or uses time in an ineffective way. • presentation inaugurates little useful discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout does not reflect discussion questions. • handout presents questions inaccurately. • presentation demonstrates minimal acquaintance with assigned reading. • presentation is very difficult to understand and/or uses time in ineffectively. • presentation is counterproductive to useful discussion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • handout demonstrates no engagement with discussion questions. • handout is inaccurate and incomprehensible. • presentation demonstrates no acquaintance with assigned reading. • presentation is incomprehensible and/or uses time ineffectively. • presentation is hostile to productive discussion.

Writing Assignments

The two **short papers** will ask you to reconstruct a key argument from the text. Rubrics will be included with the assignments. Assignments should be **blinded** and submitted as .pdfs through Canvas **before the start of class** on the due date. In general, extensions must be granted well before the due date; **late papers** will be downgraded 1/3 grade per day.

Resources

Life is especially hard right now, for everyone. And being a person is hard under the best of circumstances! You have a responsibility to take care of yourself. I can be more helpful in making accommodations if you are proactive in telling me about the challenges you're facing and demonstrate that you are addressing them in a responsible way.

Links to many resources for success are compiled here: success.rutgers.edu/. If you are struggling with **mental health**, or just need some extra guidance, get in touch with CAPS (health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/, (848) 932-7884) or some other source of support. If you are struggling with **academic responsibilities** – e.g. juggling assignments, studying or writing effectively – get in touch

with the Learning Centers (rlc.rutgers.edu), The Writing Centers (including Tutoring and Writing Coaching): (writingctr.rutgers.edu), or Student Support Services (rutgers.edu/academics/student-support).

You can report a concern about mental health, bias, sexual assault or harassment, or a violation of the Code of Student Conduct here: health.rutgers.edu/do-something-to-help.

If you need accommodations for a **disability**, have the Office of Disability Services (ods.rutgers.edu) get in touch with me.

To protect the health and well-being of all members of the University community, [masks must be worn](#) by all persons in a classroom setting. Any student not wearing a mask in class will be asked to leave.

Philosophical resources

The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (plato.stanford.edu) should be your go-to source for general philosophical consultation.

Scott Soames' *Philosophical Analysis in the 20th Century* Volume 1, does an excellent job of surveying the relevant history of analytic philosophy in a comprehensible way (albeit sometimes perhaps *too* comprehensible).

Both *Logicomix* and *Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* do an excellent job of setting the stage in a way that brings together philosophical and (the really fascinating!) personal factors.

People get *very intense* about each of these texts, and about the relation between them. I mostly encourage you to stay away from secondary sources, at least until you've grappled intensely with the primary texts yourselves. That said, here are some on-line resources for the *Tractatus* that may be helpful.

- Side-by-side presentation of the *Tractatus*' original, German text and the Ogden and the Pears & McGuinness translations: people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/
(This can be *very* useful, even if you don't read German.)
- Expandable version of P&McG translation: bazzocchi.net/wittgenstein/tractatus/eng/index.htm
- The *Tractatus* visualized as tree structure: pbellon.github.io/tractatus-tree/#/

Schedule of Readings (a rough, somewhat optimistic guide; inevitable updates on Canvas)

Th 9/8 Introduction; *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* §1
M 9/12 *Tractatus* §2-2.063
Th 9/15 *Tractatus* §2.1-2.225
M 9/19 *Tractatus* §3
Th 9/22 *Tractatus* §3
M 9/26 *Tractatus* §4

First paper topics handed out

Th 9/29 *Tractatus* §4
M 10/3 *Tractatus* §5
Th 10/6 *Tractatus* §5
M 10/10 *Tractatus* §6

First paper due

Th 10/13 *Tractatus* §7

M 10/17 *Philosophical Investigations* §§1-21
Th 10/20 *Investigations* §§1-21
M 10/24 *Investigations* §§22-64
Th 10/27 *Investigations* §§22-64
M 10/31 *Investigations* §§65-122

Second paper topics handed out

Th 11/3 **No class**
M 11/7 *Investigations* §§65-122
Th 11/10 *Investigations* §§123-171
M 11/14 *Investigations* §§123-171

Second paper due

Th 11/17 *Investigations* §§172-242
M 11/21 *Investigations* §§172-242

Th 11/24 **No class: Thanksgiving**

M 11/28 *Investigations* §§243-298
Th 12/1 *Investigations* §§243-298
M 11/14 *Investigations* §§299-485
Th 11/17 *Investigations* §§299-485
M 12/5 *Investigations* §§486-693
Th 12/8 *Investigations* §§486-693
M 12/12 Review and Conclusion

Final Paper Topics Handed Out

Th 12/22 FINAL PAPERS DUE