

Philosophy 422/522: Wittgenstein: The Early and Middle Wittgenstein

“The world is all that is the case;” “There are no pictures that are true *a priori*;” “The world is independent of my will;” “There is no such thing as the subject that thinks or entertains ideas;” “All philosophy is a critique of language;” “The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of the problem;” “[W]hat can be said at all, can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence”: these are some of the propositions with which Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951) articulates the singular, crystalline, and profound vision of the world, language, and life that he presents in his first (and only complete book-length) work, the *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus* (*Logisch-Philosophische Abhandlung*). Written largely during his time as a soldier at the battlefronts and a prisoner of war in World War I, the *Tractatus* gave decisive and guiding inspiration to the central logical, metaphysical and ethical problematics of twentieth-century philosophy and continues to provoke both profound philosophical reflection and intense critical/interpretive debates today.

In this seminar, we will closely and critically read the *Tractatus* and assess the young Wittgenstein’s claim to have “found, on all essential points, the final solution” of the philosophical problems treated therein, before turning to some of the works (such as his “Lecture on Ethics”, “Some Remarks on Logical Form,” and *Philosophical Remarks*) that document his growing dissatisfaction with the *Tractatus*’ position, and the beginnings of the movement toward a radically new one, upon returning to academic philosophy in 1929. Following this, we will turn to the deep and renewed debate that has revitalized Wittgenstein scholarship and critical discussion about the ongoing significance of the methods of analytic philosophy and the contemporary legacy of philosophical ethics, since the beginning of the twenty-first century: the so-called “Wittgenstein wars” over the legitimacy and implications of the “resolute” interpretation proposed by Cora Diamond, James Conant, and others, according to which all the apparently substantive propositions of the *Tractatus* are ultimately to be rejected as uniformly empty of sense, on the way to a clarified understanding of the illuminating potentialities and constitutive illusions of (metaphysical) meaning itself.

Throughout the course, we will aim to understand and assess the ongoing stakes for contemporary ethical-political and ethical-religious thought of Wittgenstein’s critical investigation of language and meaning, in dialogue with the broader and ongoing project of the analysis of the constitutive forms and contemporary problems of the possible senses of collective global life, both human and more-than-human, today.

Course requirements: Weekly short (1-2 pp.) response papers; final paper (10-20 pages).

PHIL 426/526: The *Bhagavad Gītā* and Yoga W 1:00–3:00

The focus of the course will be on Yoga. In the first part of the course we will study the *Bhagavad Gītā*, one of the most important scriptures of Hinduism (many would say, it expresses the very essence of Hinduism), which contains the earliest exposition of Yoga in Indian literature. We will also read excerpts from the *Mahābhārata*, the fascinating, entertaining epic poem (comparable in many ways to Homer's *Iliad*) that includes the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Then we will shift over to the *Pātañjalayogadarśana*, "the Yoga system of Patañjali," which presents Yoga as a philosophical system. As a philosophy, Yoga develops positions in metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, language, and even ethics, both under the influence of, and in dialectical tension with, the other established Indian philosophical systems of its day. This course will be devoted to studying Yoga philosophy in depth – as philosophy. (There will be no instruction in postures, movements, or meditation. The instructor, however, has practiced meditation for many years and welcomes practitioners and teachers of Yoga who are interested in learning about its theoretical background.) We will study the metaphysical foundations of Yoga (known as Sāṃkhya); the theory of "the path" to liberation, which consists in a process of gradual physical and psychological purification brought about by the practices of Yoga (e.g., the "eight limbs"); Yoga's contributions to Indian epistemology; its "theology," in particular, its doctrine of God as a proper object of meditation; the Yogic theory of supernormal powers; and, finally, the Yogic interpretation of liberation (or enlightenment). These teachings will be contextualized by relating them to competing ideas of other Indian philosophical traditions, so that the course may serve as a kind of introduction to Indian philosophy. The principal texts for the class will be *The Bhagavad Gita: A New Translation*, trans. George Thompson (North Point Press, 2008) and *The Yoga Sūtras of Patañjali: A New Edition, Translation, and Commentary*, by Edwin Bryant (North Point Press, 2009). Main course requirement: a final paper of approx. 10 pages. Students will be expected to attend class.

PHIL 442/514.001: Nietzsche

Friedrich Nietzsche is one of the most important figures in modern intellectual history. Despite his academically unconventional and highly "literary" writing style, he is now widely seen as one of the greatest philosophers of all time. He had a seminal influence on the Continental tradition of Western philosophy, initiating many of its characteristic problems and themes. More recently, philosophers in the Anglophone analytic tradition have also taken notice of him, and his writings on moral and political philosophy, in particular, have become part of the canon. Beyond this, Nietzsche has had a cultural impact extending far beyond the confines of academic philosophy, with a formative influence on many noteworthy novelists, poets, artists, cultural critics, historians, psychologists, political actors, theologians, and other intellectuals. This course will study the development of Nietzsche's philosophy, tracking his evolution from committed romantic cultural revolutionary and pro-Wagner polemicist, through his traumatic break with Wagner and withdrawal into coolly-rational and skeptical aphoristic writing, to his ultimate adoption of a passionate, quasi-prophetic role with his proclamation of the death of God, the coming of the *Übermensch*, and the eternal recurrence. Some topics to be covered include: his debt to Kant and Schopenhauer, the Apollonian-Dionysian duality, philosophical pessimism, the tragic view of reality, the aesthetic justification of existence, the organic view of culture, the modern relevance of ancient Greek culture, his critique of Socrates and Plato, the nature and value of truth, his critique of science, his views on education, perfectionism, the will to power, perspectivism and interpretation, his critique of Christianity and modern morality, his views on femininity, his psychology and philosophy of the self, *amor fati* and freedom, nobility and the higher man, the philosopher of the future, nihilism and the affirmation of life, and the role of autobiography in Nietzsche's thought. Because an acquaintance with the philosophers Nietzsche draws upon and criticizes, such as the Pre-Socratics, Socrates, Plato, the Hellenistic Schools, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and Schopenhauer, will be presupposed, you should not take this course unless you have a background in the history of philosophy before Nietzsche equivalent to that provided in the department's Greek Philosophy and Early Modern Philosophy classes. An acquaintance with the Bible and the Christian intellectual tradition (e.g., Augustine, Aquinas, and Martin Luther) is also strongly recommended. Textbook: Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large (eds.), *The Nietzsche Reader* (Wiley Blackwell, 2006).

Phil 442.002: Sem: Henry David Thoreau

This course explores the rich and vibrant work of Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862). In his time, as in ours, Thoreau has been cast in dichotomies. He is criticized as a narcissist and misanthropist who cared little about his fellow humans. He is praised for his eloquence in articulating a philosophy of life as well as an exuberant relationship with nature. In this course, we will move beyond these dichotomies to explore the complex work of Thoreau—from his praise of deliberate living in *Walden*, to his social activism expressed in his essays, to his natural history writing. We will investigate his influences, such as Asian philosophy, as well as his influence on others, such as on Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

This course is interdisciplinary and reflects the comprehensiveness of Thoreau's work. Through the lens of philosophy, we explore his philosophy as a way of life and ethical imperatives such as civil disobedience. Through the lens of sustainability, we consider ideas about simplicity, the value of other species, and the preservation of nature. Through the lens of religion, we explore the impact of Asian religions on Thoreau as well as his daily life as a spiritual practice. And through the lens of literature, we explore his experimentation as a writer.

This course is discussion-based, interactive, and dynamic. You are expected to attend and participate in all classes.

Required Texts

Thoreau, Henry David, *Walden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006)

Thoreau, Henry David, *Essays of Henry David Thoreau*, Lewis Hyde, Editor (North Point Press, 2002)

Course Packet from UNM Copy Center

PHIL 454/554.001: Sem: Philosophy of Identity

This course proposes a philosophical exploration of the notion of identity, understood broadly, and from a cosmopolitan point of view. It aims to take a critical approach to this concept that is saturating much of contemporary discourse, whether in education, politics, entertainment, or daily life. The concept of identity is relatively recent. It was thematized by philosophy and psychology in the middle of the 20th century. Other concepts that were more prevalent in philosophical texts – self, mind, soul, subject, person(hood), etc. – will be considered relevant to this investigation and explored alongside. As an attempt to think this notion critically, the course adopts a cross-cultural or cosmopolitan philosophical approach. We will read texts from different periods and traditions drawn from Indian, Greek, continental, and analytic sources. The selection of texts will attempt to provide a comprehensive survey of the problem as discussed in different contexts: the opposition between self and non-self in Indian non-Buddhist and Buddhist philosophies; the Aristotelian and Platonist view of the complexity of the mind or individual; the emergence of modern conceptions in Locke, Leibniz, and Kant; the destabilization of the transparency of identity with Freud; the introduction of the notion of narrative identity with Ricoeur. We will reserve time to examine the notion of collective identity.

The course will function primarily as a seminar revolving around the discussion of texts. Students will be expected to prepare the readings closely and be ready to discuss them in class. Assignments will include leading a class discussion, a weekly analytical journal, and a final paper.

Philosophy 466.001/566.001: Poetry against Technological Nihilism

Professor Iain Thomson

Like Matthew Arnold before him, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) thought only poetry could save Western humanity from historical *nihilism*, our growing sense of the *meaninglessness* of all things. In this course, we will seek to understand Heidegger's ontohistorical critique of the nihilism of our technological understanding of being as well as his complementary hope for the salvific insights disclosed by his philosophical reading of the great German Romantic poet, Friedrich Hölderlin. The fundamental problem, Heidegger suggests, is that our essential nature—our defining and distinctive ability to skillfully disclose intrinsic meanings (i.e., *poiesis* or poetic bringing-into-being)—is getting progressively eclipsed by late-modern humanity's uncanny resourcefulness at willfully imposing preconceived forms on supposedly inert matter (i.e., *technê* or technological enframing). For Heidegger, this nihilistic eclipse of poetic disclosure by technological enframing must be thoughtfully understood (in terms of its deep ontohistorical and ontotheological roots) and poetically disclosed (in terms of its phenomenological branches or felt implications in our sense of the world) if Western humanity is to find a path through the current "night of the world" of nihilism and into the dawn of a genuine *post-modernity*, an "other beginning" to history. This almost incredibly ambitious attempt to transcend technological nihilism poetically—and so to inaugurate a new age philosophically—is what led the later Heidegger repeatedly to engage with Hölderlin's poetry. Focusing closely on one crucial moment on this "thought-path" (or *Denkweg*), we will try to understand how Heidegger formulated the central project of his later work, where he went astray (philosophically and politically), and what remains crucially important in his historically-revolutionary philosophical ambitions today. Our itinerary will thus proceed as follows: After orienting ourselves with a brief overview of the later Heidegger's philosophy and the place of both his critique of technology and his understanding of poetry within it, we will dedicate the remainder of the course to a careful reading of one of Heidegger's fascinating and troubling lectures on Hölderlin (works which span the period from 1934 to 1968), focusing on his pivotal 1941–42 lectures on *Hölderlin's Hymn "Remembrance [Andenken]"*. (For those looking for a fuller understanding and intensive engagement with Heidegger's work, this course would be complemented well by my "Later Heidegger" class.)

Course Requirements: This course will require some difficult and challenging reading. To facilitate your digestions of these works, attendance is required. As this is a class in the art of close reading, you will be required to do the reading ahead of time and bring the appropriate book(s) with you to class. If it becomes necessary to enforce attendance or preparation (which I hope it won't!), that will

be done with brief in-class quizzes on the reading assigned for that day's class. Grades will be based on any such quizzes (for a maximum of 10% of your grade), with the rest of your grade divided between two high-quality philosophy papers or, for graduate students, one polished research paper.

Required Texts: 1). Thomson, *Heidegger on Technology's Danger and Promise in the Age of AI* (I will make sure Zimmerman library has a free digital copy of this short book); Heidegger, *Hölderlin's Hymn "Remembrance."* **Recommended Texts:** 3). Hölderlin, *Poems and Fragments*, Fourth edition; 4). Thomson, *Rethinking Death in and after Heidegger* (we will be reading and discussing chapter 3, on the role of Heidegger's engagement with Hölderlin in his later work, which you should be able to download from Zimmerman library if you do not want the larger context provided by the paperback).

PHIL 480.001: Philosophy and Literature
T/R 2:00 - 3:15pm

T. S. Eliot writes that philosophy and literature are two different languages about the same world.

What are these 'languages'? If different, do they think, speak, and reveal the world differently? Is one more 'rational' and the other 'irrational'? Is one illustrative and the other assertorial? Is one more true than the other? Further, how does literature call forth thinking and reflection of the world? What 'kind' of thinking, what kind of reflection, is literature? How does philosophy call forth thinking and reflection of the world? What 'kind' of thinking, what kind of reflection, is philosophy? And what is nature of the relation of philosophy and literature: do literature and philosophy quarrel, as Plato depicts them? Or are they allies, complementing one another in our beautiful human struggle for deepening thinking, experience, and feeling?

The course will examine what is philosophy and what is literature, each in light of the other and their relation, encounter, and interplay. The possibilities for mutual illumination are vast. Our course readings will exemplify both literature and philosophy. We will consider matters of craft and form, imagination and imagery, experience and reasoning, author and reader, *poiesis* and *mimesis*, and substantive philosophical questions in the lights of philosophical and literary modes.

We will read closely a range of philosophical authors at the intersection of philosophy and literature. Our readings will usually be relatively short to allow us close and slow reading. Readings will include Jorge Luis Borges' mind-bending philosophical fictions, Wallace Stevens' cerebral modern poetry, Eva Brann on imagination, and Martin Heidegger on poetry, language, thought. Additional texts will likely include Rilke, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche, Faulkner, Tanizaki, Sophocles, Zhuangzi, Heraclitus, Benjamin, Pippin, Manguel, Harvey.

The majority of our course texts will be provided as PDFs at no cost on Canvas. I'm anticipating (at most) two required paperback book purchases: Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions* and Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, and Thought* (current total cost of the two books purchased new on Amazon is \$26).

Course requirements include mandatory class attendance and participation, thoughtful reading of assigned texts, occasional reading quizzes, brief response writings, one or two polished short essays (4-6pp.), and a take-home final paper (8-10pp.). Students taking the course for graduate credit will be encouraged to write a longer final paper.

Prerequisite: one Philosophy course, or permission of the instructor. Students pursuing degrees in all areas of study are welcome.

PHIL 486/586.001: Lacan

Adrian Johnston

Jacques Lacan was a major figure in Parisian intellectual life for much of the twentieth century. He arguably is the most important figure in the history of psychoanalysis after Sigmund Freud himself. Lacan's teachings and writings explore the significance of Freud's discovery of the unconscious both within the theory and practice of analysis itself as well as in connection with a wide range of other disciplines. Especially for those interested in the philosophical dimensions of Freudian thought, Lacan's *oeuvre* is invaluable. Over the course of the past fifty-plus years, Lacanian ideas have become absolutely central to the various receptions of things psychoanalytic in Continental philosophical circles. Moreover, much of today's global psychoanalytic community is Lacanian or Lacan-inspired. This course will focus on Lacan's seventh seminar of 1959-1960 on "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis." Lacan himself felt that this specific annual installment of *le Séminaire* was particularly pivotal in the arc of his teaching. Similarly, many Lacanians often identify *Seminar VII* as marking a sort of "turn" in Lacan's thinking away from the more classically structuralist sensibilities coloring his work throughout the 1950s. In addressing "The Ethics of Psychoanalysis," the Lacan of 1959-1960 engages broadly and deeply with such points of reference as Immanuel Kant's practical philosophy, Sophocles's *Antigone*, the Marquis de Sade's literary corpus, and the Freud of such key texts as the 1895 *Project for a Scientific Psychology* and 1920's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. This course will involve a close reading of *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis, 1959-1960*.

Philosophy 486.002/586.002: Later Heidegger

Professor Iain Thomson

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) is widely recognized the most influential philosopher of the 20th century, yet many of the views at the heart of his “later” work remain shrouded in confusion and controversy. Focusing carefully on a few of the works Heidegger composed after *Being and Time* (1927), this seminar will seek to clarify, explain, and critique Heidegger’s later views on the immense significance of art, poetry, and language; his critical understanding of metaphysics as ontotheology; his insightful reading of Nietzsche and linked critique of technology as nihilism; his critical views of modern “subjectivism” and late-modern “enframing” and complementary vision of a post-nihilistic postmodernity. Along the way, we will address the issue of when exactly Heidegger’s “later” work begins and how best to characterize its most distinctive and enduringly important philosophical features.

This course is good (indeed, indispensable) preparation for understanding much subsequent work in continental philosophy and the other theoretical humanities, which often take Heidegger’s insights as their own point of philosophical departure. For example, Heidegger’s later work decisively shaped the concepts and concerns of such major continental thinkers as Agamben, Arendt, Badiou, Baudrillard, Blanchot, Butler, Cavell, Deleuze, Derrida, Dreyfus, Foucault, Gadamer, Irigaray, Lacan, Levinas, Marcuse, Rancière, Rorty, Taylor, Vattimo, and Žižek—and this remains the case even where these thinkers approach Heidegger’s thought quite critically (as they all do, in their own distinctive and interesting ways). One thus needs to understand Heidegger in order to see where these thinkers are coming from, even if his is a thinking they seek (more and less successfully) to move beyond. (For those looking for a fuller understanding and intensive engagement with Heidegger’s work, this course would be complemented well by my “Poetry Against Technological Nihilism” class.)

Prerequisites: Graduate standing, some background in continental philosophy (or other experience interpreting dense philosophical works), or consent of instructor. **Course**

Requirements: This course will require some difficult and challenging reading. To facilitate your digestions of these works, attendance is required. As this is a class in the art of close reading, you will be required to do the reading ahead of time and bring the appropriate book(s) with you to class. If it becomes necessary to enforce attendance or preparation (which I hope it won’t!), that will be done with brief in-class quizzes on the reading assigned for that day’s class. Grades will be based on any such quizzes (for a maximum of 10% of your grade), with the rest of your grade divided between two high-quality philosophy papers or, for graduate students, one polished research paper. **Required texts:** 1). Heidegger, *Off the Beaten Track*; 2). Thomson, *Heidegger, Art, and Postmodernity*; and 3). Thomson, *Rethinking Death in and after Heidegger*.

PHIL 670: Seminar in Sanskrit Philosophical Texts, F 1:00–3:30

This is a tutorial for advanced students of Sanskrit. Readings will be selected according to student interest. Knowledge of Sanskrit is presupposed. UNM at this time does not offer an introductory Sanskrit sequence.