Wittgenstein’s late, mostly-finished masterpiece *Philosophical Investigations* begins with topics appropriate to the philosophy of language, such as the nature of reference. The treatment of linguistic meaning merges, however, into a novel discussion of rationality, social practices, and the aims of philosophy. We shall read what used to be called Part I of the Investigations, discussing topics such as ostension, rule-following, and the nature of the privacy or the “inner.” Then we shall consider some implications of Wittgenstein’s ideas for the study of ethics and society through readings from Cavell, McDowell, Wiggins, Diamond, Crary, Johnston, Pitkin, Eldridge, O’Connor, and Winch.

**Course objectives:** familiarity with the thought of the late Wittgenstein, understanding applications of Wittgenstein’s thought in some philosophical subfields, experience in philosophical research.

**Required Texts:**

(available at bookstore)


(available on Blackboard)

- Stanley Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy”
- Stanley Cavell, “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language”
- John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason”
- David Wiggins, “Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life”
- Cora Diamond, “Wittgenstein, Mathematics, and Ethics”
- Alice Crary, *Beyond Moral Judgment*, ch. 3
- Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*, ch. 1
- Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, ch. 9
- Richard Eldridge, “Wittgenstein and the Conversation of Justice”
• Peter Winch, selection from *The Idea of a Social Science*
• Peter Winch, “Understanding a Primitive Society”
• Peg O’Connor, *Oppression and Responsibility*, ch. 1

**Optional Texts:**

• Style guide [on Blackboard]
• Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*
• David G. Stern, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: an introduction*
• G. P. Baker and P.M.S. Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Understanding and Meaning, Part II: Exegesis* and/or *Rules, Grammar, and Necessity* and/or *Meaning and Mind*

**More on the texts:**

• This new edition just came out last year, addressing some of the infinite complaints about the previous editions. Please get it, not the previous ones.
• I strongly recommend that you acquire a commentary, such as one of the ones listed above, or, if you have a specific interest, then a work from the suggested bibliography on page 4. But I am not assigning readings from the commentaries.

**Course requirements:**

• CLASS PARTICIPATION (30%)
• [PRESENTATION – required only for graduate students]
• DRAFT ABSTRACT (10%)
• ROUGH DRAFT (20%)
• TERM PAPER (40%)

**Grade components:**

*Class participation.*
This is a function of your attendance and the quality of your contributions to the class discussion; it is not a function of the quantity of your contributions to the class discussion. You are expected to be well-prepared and present for all sessions.

*Presentation.* (approx. 20 minutes)
A presentation is required for graduate students and optional for everyone else. You are to present on the day’s reading (or some portion thereof): briefly review its contents for the class, present your assessment of it, and moderate a brief discussion. If you want to bring handouts or assign a brief passage in advance, then please arrange it. Peer assessment will play a role in evaluation of your presentation. (See peer assessment sheet on page 5.) Your success (or lack thereof) will figure into your participation grade.

*Draft abstract.* (200 words)
A short abstract of your term paper. You should at least identify your subject matter and what you intend to say about it, based on what argument or evidence. **Note: this abstract is due in
Week 8, so if you want to write about any issues or texts that arise late in the semester, then you should read ahead to find a topic that engages you.

Rough draft. (approx. 3000 words)
Mostly self-explanatory, but note: this is a graded assignment, and as such, all policies, including that concerning plagiarism, apply.

Term paper. (approx. 3000 words; max 4000 words)
For your term paper you must do at least the following: identify some interpretive or theoretical issue that emerges out of the *Investigations* or another of this semester’s readings, discuss how some commentator has addressed the issue, present an alternative understanding of the issue, and explain why your understanding is superior. Note that “emerges out of” in the first sentence is vague. Please note the length requirements.

Policies:

Classroom.
No cell phones or text messaging devices. Respect your classmates and their opinions.

Plagiarism.
Any use of unacknowledged sources constitutes plagiarism and will result in grade of F for the course. If this is at all unclear to you, then consult the library’s page on plagiarism: http://library.lib.binghamton.edu/instruct/plagiarism.html

Late papers.
No late papers are accepted. If this is a problem for you, pretend that all the assignments are due earlier than they are.

NOTE: Students seeking disability-based accommodations in academic courses should request such adjustments through the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office.

Research resources:

By far the best way to find relevant literature will be to look to see what’s cited in something you’ve already found. To get you started, I’ve put a suggested bibliography on the following page. I haven’t bothered to strive for comprehensiveness (in particular: no journal articles) because the works listed have good bibliographies and because comprehensiveness would be impossible – there’s just too much.

The usual routes for finding secondary literature are of course available: e.g., checking the databases (Philosophers’ Index, jstor, and, for relatively recent books, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*) and asking me.
There is approximately one journal devoted to Wittgenstein’s thought: *Philosophical Investigations*. (The journal isn’t really devoted to Wittgenstein. But it is.) There are also published proceedings for the annual International Wittgenstein Symposium in Austria, but I’ve never seen them. And yet I am certain that they exist.

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

* indicates a source of one of our required readings
◊ indicates that it contains an extensive bibliography

*Stanley Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*
*Stanley Cavell, *The Claims of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy*
Richard Eldridge, *Leading a Human Life*
Sabina Lovibond, *Ethical Formation*
John McDowell, *Mind and World*
*John McDowell, *Mind, Value, and Reality*
◊Marie McGinn, *Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations*
David Pears, *Ludwig Wittgenstein*
Hanna Fenichel Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*
◊David Stern, *Wittgenstein’s Philosophical Investigations: An Introduction*
*Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science*

**ALSO HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

David Bloor, *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*
*◊Alice Crary, *Beyond Moral Judgment*
John Danford, *Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*
Robert Fogelin, *Wittgenstein*
◊Cressida J. Heyes, *The Grammar of Politics: Wittgenstein and Political Philosophy*
*Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*
Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein: Rethinking the Inner*
Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, *Rationality and Relativism*
Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*
Jonathan Lear, *Open Minded*
◊Peg O’Connor ed., *Feminist Interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein*
Peg O’Connor, *Morality and Our Complicated Form of Life*
Henry Staten, *Wittgenstein and Derrida*
◊Hans Sluga and David Stern eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*
Bryan R. Wilson ed., *Rationality*
Crispin Wright, *Wittgenstein on the Foundation of Mathematics*
PRESENTATION ASSESSMENT SHEET

PRESENTER: _________________________________

WAS THE THESIS OR EXPLANATORY AIM OF THE PRESENTATION CLEAR? WHAT WAS IT?

WAS EVIDENCE OR ARGUMENTATION USED EFFECTIVELY? WHAT CONSIDERATION WAS PARTICULARLY COMPELLING?

WHICH POINTS RECEIVED THE GREATEST EMPHASIS?

HOW WAS THE PRESENTATION STRUCTURED OR ORGANIZED?

DID THE PRESENTER MANAGE TO SUSTAIN INTEREST IN THE MATERIAL?

DID THE PRESENTER SUCCEED IN GENERATING DISCUSSION ON THE TOPIC? HOW SO?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON CLARITY, INTERESTINGNESS, HELPFULNESS OF PRESENTATION, PREPARATION OF PRESENTER:
PHIL 435J/550C: Wittgenstein
Course Schedule

*Trying to situate Wittgenstein’s enterprise by doing reading for the first meeting*

**WED 1 SEPT**  
Stanley Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy”  
Stanley Cavell, “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language”

[4–12 SEPT: no classes]

**THE PHILOSOPHICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

**WED 15 SEPT**  §§1–64: *the Augustinian picture and ostension*  
[17 SEPT: add/drop deadline]

**WED 22 SEPT**  §§65–88: *meaning*

**WED 29 SEPT**  §§89–133: *the possibilities of philosophy*

**WED 6 OCT**  §§134–84: *understanding*

**WED 13 OCT**  §§185–202: *rules and grammar*

**WED 20 OCT**  §§203–242: *following a rule*

**WED 27 OCT**  §§243–315: *private language and the inner*  
**ABSTRACT DUE**  
[29 OCT: course withdrawal deadline]

**WED 3 NOV**  §§316–???? (as much as you can): *let’s try to finish the book*

**APPLICATIONS, APPROPRIATIONS, DEPLOYMENTS**

**WED 10 NOV**  
John McDowell, “Virtue and Reason”  
David Wiggins, “Truth, Invention, and the Meaning of Life”

**WED 17 NOV**  
Cora Diamond, “Wittgenstein, Mathematics, and Ethics: Resisting the Attraction of Realism”  
Alice Crary, *Beyond Moral Judgment*, ch. 3  
Paul Johnston, *Wittgenstein and Moral Philosophy*, ch. 1  
**ROUGH DRAFT DUE**

[WED 24 NOV: no class]

**WED 1 DEC**  
Hanna Pitkin, *Wittgenstein and Justice*, ch. 9  
Richard Eldridge, “Wittgenstein and the Conversation of Justice”

**WED 8 DEC**  
Peter Winch, selection from *The Idea of a Social Science*  
Peter Winch, “Understanding a Primitive Society”  
Peg O’Connor, *Oppression and Responsibility*, ch. 1

Term papers are due on the final day of class.