James Pearson

Topics in Analytic Philosophy Syllabus
Spring 2010
Course Description

        In the last century, the analytic tradition rose to dominate Anglo-American philosophy. Analytic philosophers took the "linguistic turn," believing that traditional philosophical problems could be best understood by carefully attending to the ways in which we use language. This course will examine the origins of this tradition by considering three of its key figures: Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein. These philosophers developed responses to central problems in epistemology and metaphysics by attending to the logic of our language.

        We will begin this course by investigating Frege's answer to core epistemological problems in the philosophy of mathematics. What are numbers? How do we know what properties they have? Could we be mistaken about theorems which we seem to have proved? The new logic which Frege developed to answer these questions was applied by Russell to more general epistemological matters: how do we know about the external world? How can we use language to express meaningful possibilities about the way the world is to one another? We will then move on to consider Wittgenstein's critique of the metaphysical picture of language and reality underpinning both Frege and Russell's approach. Is the construction of artificial "logically perfect" languages necessary to address philosophical questions? Do philosophical questions admit of "solutions"?

        By the end of this course, you will have developed an understanding of the core methods, claims, attractions, and limitations of analytic philosophy. In your term paper, you will have the opportunity to investigate an aspect of the course that has particularly interested you.

Course Requirements

Weekly Reading Response Papers – 10%
        Each week you will write a short, one page response paper to the assigned reading. You should write about an issue or an argument which has particularly interested or confused you. You must turn in at least *twelve* of the fourteen papers which will be assigned over the course of the semester. These papers will be due at the start of each Tuesday class.

Midterm Exam – 25%
        There will be a take-home midterm exam for this class. You will write a number of short essay responses to prompts which will be based upon topics that have arisen in both the readings and in our class discussions. I will give you the exam on Thursday February 25, and it will be due on Tuesday March 2. I encourage you to discuss the questions on the exam with each other, but will expect you to carefully cite any ideas that are generated by such discussions. The eventual written work on your exam must be yours and yours alone.

Term Paper – 40%
        At the end of the course I shall expect you to turn in a term paper (ten double spaced pages, 12 point Times New Roman font, with 1" margins). This paper will give you an opportunity to explore in detail a part of the course which has particularly interested you. You will be expected to book an appointment with me to discuss your plan for the final paper during the last week of class. A hard copy of the final version is to be placed in my box in the Philosophy Department, 1001 Cathedral of Learning, by noon on **Tuesday April 27**. Papers received after this time will be subject to the late policy below.

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<u>Participation and Presentation – 25%</u>

       Merely attending class will not earn you a participation grade. To participate is to arrive at class punctually and to regularly contribute to collegiate discussion. I shall be closely monitoring your participation in class throughout the semester. You are also encouraged to use the online discussion board, available through Courseweb, to talk about the readings and classroom discussions with other students. Individual posts will not be graded, but your contribution to the forum will be taken into account when determining this component of your final grade.

       At the start of the semester, each of you will also be expected to sign up, in pairs, for a presentation. You will arrange to meet your partner outside of class, and, together, you will prepare a five minute introduction to the reading you present, briefly summarizing what you consider to be its focus, and highlighting issues it raised that you found particularly interesting, confusing or challenging. As a pair, you will then field questions about the reading from the class. You will both be expected to make significant contributions to the class discussion concerning the article which you present. Your presentation will be evaluated as part of this component of your final grade.

How to do well in this class

       Come to class prepared. Being prepared means that you have completed the assigned readings, thought carefully about them, and have begun to formulate questions concerning the issues they raise. Participate actively in class; ask questions in our discussions, and respond to each other's questions. These class experiences, in which you will have to clearly explain yourselves to each other, will be invaluable when you come to complete your written assignments. I expect a high level of argumentative clarity in your papers, which means you should anticipate, articulate and respond to objections that your reader might have to your view.

Texts

Martinich, Aloysius and E. David Sosa (eds.) *Analytic Philosophy: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. (Referred to in reading schedule as "MS.")

Frege, Gottlob. *Foundations of Arithmetic*. Trans. J. L. Austin. 2nd Revised Ed. Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1980. (Referred to in reading schedule as "FA.")

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness. New York: Routledge, 2001. (Referred to in reading schedule as "TLP")

       Additional readings will be made available online through Courseweb, or will be on reserve in Hillman Library. You are expected to print your own copy of each assigned paper and bring it with you to class.

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Class Reading Schedule

Week 1	(Jan 7)	Introductory Remarks
Week 2	(Jan 12)	Gottlob Frege. *Foundations of Arithmetic* (FA). Introduction (i-xi) and §§ 1-4
	(Jan 14)	FA §§ 5-17
Week 3	(Jan 19)	FA §§ 18-28
	(Jan 21)	FA §§ 29-39
Week 4	(Jan 26)	FA §§ 40-54
	(Jan 28)	FA §§ 55-69
Week 5	(Feb 2)	Gottlob Frege. "On Sense and Reference." MS, pp. 7-18.
	(Feb 4)	"On Sense and Reference" contd.
Week 6	(Feb 9)	Gottlob Frege. "Thought." MS, pp. 19-31.
	(Feb 11)	"Thought" contd.
Week 7	(Feb 16)	Bertrand Russell. "On Denoting." MS, pp. 32-40.
	(Feb 18)	P. F. Strawson. "On Referring." MS, pp. 41-54.
Week 8	(Feb 23)	Bertrand Russell. "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description." MS, pp. 185-189.
	(Feb 25)	Edmund Gettier. "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" MS, pp. 199-200.
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Week 9	(Mar 2)	Bertrand Russell. "On The Relations of Universals and Particulars." MS, pp. 101-111.
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	(Mar 4)	"On The Relations of Universals and Particulars" contd.
Week 10	(Mar 9 and 11)	*SPRING BREAK*
Week 11	(Mar 16)	Ludwig Wittgenstein. *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (TLP).
	(Mar 18)	TLP contd.
Week 12	(Mar 23)	TLP contd.
	(Mar 25)	TLP contd.
Week 13	(Mar 30)	G.E. Moore. "Four Forms of Scepticism." MS, pp. 155-170.
	(Apr 1)	Ludwig Wittgenstein. "On Certainty." MS, pp. 171-184.
Week 14	(Apr 6)	Ludwig Wittgenstein. "The Blue and Brown Books." MS, pp. 497-510.
	(Apr 8)	"The Blue and Brown Books," contd.
Week 15	(Apr 13)	"The Blue and Brown Books," contd.
	(Apr 15)	"The Blue and Brown Books," contd.
Week 16	(Apr 20)	W.V. Quine. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism. MS, pp. 450-462.
	(Apr 22)	Wilfrid Sellars. "Philosophy and the Scientific Image of Man." MS, pp. 473-496.
	Apr 27	*TERM PAPER DUE*