

WITTGENSTEIN FOR THEOLOGY
RGT 3753/6753 M.LAVIN

1. Introduction
2. Biographical sketch of Wittgenstein
3. Tractatus – Aims and Structure
4. Tractatus – Structure of the World/Structure of Language
5. Philosophical Investigations – Understanding the PI
6. Philosophical Investigations – a) Meaning and Use
b) Understanding/Rule Following
7. - READING WEEK -
8. Philosophical Investigations – a) Grammar b) Language-
Games/Family Resemblances c) Forms of Life
9. Philosophical Investigations – a) The Private Language Argument
b) Synopsis, earlier/later Wittgenstein
10. Wittgenstein and Religion
11. The Mystical
12. Religion as a ‘Form of Life’
13. Theology as ‘Grammar’
14. - EXAM WEEK -

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Wittgenstein is arguably the greatest philosopher of the 20th century, and is frequently cited in connection with developments in theology and the philosophy of religion. This course will focus on his accounts of language and meaning in both his early and later works, and on how his thought relates to religious belief and commitment. It will examine the role of language and the possibility of talk about God and explore the implications of our understanding of language for how we think about reality, knowledge, and God.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To develop a knowledge and critical understanding of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations*
- To develop an understanding of the 'turn to language' debate
- To develop a knowledge and critical understanding of how these works relate to an understanding of religious belief and theological discourse
- To engage seemingly incommensurable issues in intra-faith, inter-faith, and ecumenical dialogue
- To encourage the engagement of Wittgenstein's other works, particularly those that include comments on religious belief

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Assigned readings
2. Questions on assigned readings
3. Case-study
4. Major paper

1. Assigned Readings

Careful reading of the assigned works is an essential element of this course.

2. Questions on Assigned Readings Due: On-going

This consists of questions on some of the major themes in the *Tractatus*, *Philosophical Investigations*, and on Wittgenstein's understanding of the 'Mystical' and the 'Ethical'. See attached "Questions on Assigned Reading". These papers must be submitted on the day on which the topic of the paper is discussed in class. Choose **FIVE** out of the seven topics provided. The paper should be 2 pages, double-spaced.

3. Case-Study Due March 24

The case-study will provide an example in either intra-religious dialogue, ecumenical dialogue, or inter-religious dialogue that illustrates an issue of seeming incommensurability. Use the template provided: “Case-study – Wittgenstein”. The case-study should include the following dimensions:

- Set the scene
- Explain the nature of the incommensurability
- Explain the major areas of disagreement
- Recommendations for issues that can promote dialogue
- Suggestions for possible outcomes and their implications

4. Major Paper: (Basic Degree 8-10 pages; Advanced Degree 15-20 pages) Due: Basic Degree April 14, Advanced Degree May 30

Paper Topic:

Explain and critically evaluate ONE of the following statements:

1. “Religious belief constitutes its own distinctive ‘language-game’ and, as such, cannot be assessed from outside”. .
2. “Religious claims are meaningful insofar as they are used in actual religious contexts such as worship and mission”.
3. Christian doctrines ought to be understood as rules by which the Christian language-game is conducted”.

Your paper should evidence the following general principles:

- A clear thesis statement
- Focused argument
- Analytical development
- Critical analysis
- Summation

COURSE WEIGHTING

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| 1. | Questions on assigned readings: | 50% (10% each) |
| 2. | Case-study: | 10% |
| 3. | Major paper | 40% |

LEARNING OUTCOMES

<i>Course Outcomes</i>	<i>Course Element</i>	<i>ThD/PhD Outcomes</i>
<i>By the end of this course students will have:</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read and discussed the <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> and the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> of Ludwig Wittgenstein. 	Assigned readings, seminar discussions, lectures	1.1; 1.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An increased awareness of Wittgenstein's contribution to philosophy 	Questions for assigned readings	1.1; 1.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to articulate the main issues regarding the 'turn to language debate'. 	Questions for assigned readings.	2.3; 2.4; 2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ability to articulate Wittgenstein's contribution to the philosophy of religion 	Case-study Final paper	2.3; 2.4; 2.5