



PHIL 491: Majors Seminar

Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations*

Wednesdays, 14:00-17:00, location TBD

Ori Simchen

ori.simchen@ubc.ca

BUCH E267

Office hours: Tuesdays 2-4 (by appointment)

Course Description: This seminar is an in-depth study of one of the most important, influential, and least understood works in 20th century philosophy, Wittgenstein's posthumously published *Philosophical Investigations*. Among other difficulties, the *Investigations* challenges our normal procedure for confronting philosophical texts. Due to such difficulties, our meetings will consist of close readings and open discussion. It is especially important to stay on top of the material, prepare questions in advance, and attend regularly. Attendance is mandatory. During our weekly meetings one or two of you will present on the week's reading. If you have any inkling now of a future absence, please let me know as soon as possible.

Text: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, 4th Edition (Blackwell, 2009). The book should be available for purchase at the UBC Bookstore.

Requirements: Regular attendance and participation (15% of final grade), in-class presentation (15%), a term paper outline due on April 1 (~2 pages, 15%), and a term paper due no later than April 15 (~10 pages, 55%).

A Note on Plagiarism: (from the UBC Calendar:) Plagiarism, which is intellectual theft, occurs where an individual submits or presents the oral or written work of another person as his or her own. Scholarship quite properly rests upon examining and referring to the thoughts and writings of others. However, when another person's words (i.e. phrases, sentences, or paragraphs), ideas, or entire works are used, the author must be acknowledged in the text, in footnotes, in endnotes, or in another accepted form of academic citation. Where direct quotations are made, they must be clearly delineated (for example, within quotation marks or separately indented). Failure to provide proper attribution is plagiarism because it represents someone else's work as one's own. Plagiarism should not occur in submitted drafts or final works. A student who seeks assistance from a tutor or other scholastic aids must ensure that the work submitted is the student's own. Students are responsible for ensuring that any work submitted does not constitute plagiarism. Students who are in any doubt as to what constitutes plagiarism should consult their instructor before handing in any assignments. A link about Academic misconduct is below:

<https://academicintegrity.ubc.ca/regulation-process/academic-misconduct/>

The use of ChatGPT or similar AI or online resources for assignments is not permitted, and constitutes a form of academic misconduct.

Student Support: UBC provides resources to support student learning and to maintain healthy lifestyles but recognizes that sometimes crises arise and so there are additional resources to access including those for survivors of sexual violence. UBC values respect for the person and ideas of all members of the academic community. Harassment and discrimination are not tolerated nor is suppression of academic freedom. UBC provides appropriate accommodation for students with disabilities and for religious and cultural observances. UBC values academic honesty and students are expected to acknowledge the ideas generated by others and to uphold the highest academic standards in all of their actions. Details of the policies and how to access support are available here:

<https://senate.ubc.ca/policies-resources-support-student-success>

Course Schedule: It's hard to anticipate exactly how much we will cover from one week to the next. My hope is that we can get through about 15-20 pages of text each week, but we may decide that certain sections are worth skipping or (more likely) linger on particularly challenging passages. The book is divided up into numbered paragraphs, ranging from page-long meditations on a particular topic to sentence-long aphorisms of striking originality and power. How the paragraphs should be grouped together thematically is itself highly contested. We will be following my former teacher Warren Goldfarb's rough division:

- §§1-43: Meaning and reference
- §§44-64: Logical analysis
- §§65-91: Universals and the fixity of meaning
- §§92-137: Philosophical theories
- §§138-184: Understanding
- §§185-240: Rule-following
- §§243-309: Privacy of mental states
- §§310-430: Mental states and episodes – thought, imagination, consciousness
- §§431-693: Mental states and future orientation

Please note: For our first meeting on January 7, please read up to §43 (pp. 3e-25e). There is a good chance I will be away for (what would have been) our second meeting on January 14. I will let you know as soon as I can.

Final remark: At the moment I do not anticipate delving into the vast secondary literature surrounding the *Investigations*. Should it become necessary later on to consider some commentary, I will put relevant material on reserve.