Course description

In this course, ordinary language philosophy is defined as the tradition in philosophy after Ludwig Wittgenstein and J. L. Austin, as extended by Stanley Cavell. The course will focus on some key texts in this tradition, and ask how it changes our understanding of what it means to “do philosophy” or “do theory.” The course will have an interdisciplinary perspective, in which philosophy, literary studies, and feminist theory will be placed in conversation with one another.

Organization of the course

We will meet from 10-12 and from 14-16 every day. I will assume that everyone has read the text in advance. Participants should be ready to ask questions about the texts, and participate in discussion.

This short course can’t provide a full-scale introduction to Wittgenstein, Austin, and Cavell. In particular, it is impossible to read much Wittgenstein in the amount of time we have available. My strategy will be to begin by looking at a few fundamental texts in the OLP tradition, and then try to deepen the understanding by showing, through class discussion, how this tradition encounter the Saussurean and post-Saussurean vision of language, at the same time as we move towards feminist and literary studies.

“Background reading” means that you should bring the text with you to class, and expect that we may want to look at certain pages or passages, but that we won’t examine it in detail.

“Recommended reading” means a highly relevant text you may want to read when you have time.
Monday 25 May: A Revolution in Philosophy - Language as action, expression, use

Julio Cortázar, “Lucas His Spanish Classes” (short story)
Austin, “A Plea for Excuses.”

* 

14-16: Cavell, “Excursus on Wittgenstein’s Vision of Language” (chapter 7 in *The Claim of Reason* (pp. 168-190).)
Conant, “Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use”
Cavell, “Life forms”

Background reading: Diamond, “Rules – Looking in the Right Place”

Tuesday 26 May: Sign, Language, Reading

10-12: *The sign*
Wittgenstein: §431-433
Excerpts from Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*:
- Introduction: Chapter II-V (pp. 6-23 in McGraw Hill paperback)
- Part One: General Principles, Chapters I and II, and §9 Conclusions in Ch. III (pp. 65-78 and pp. 98-100 in the McGraw Hill paperback)
- Part Two: Synchronic Linguistics, Ch. I-IV (to the end of “Linguistic Value”) (pp. 101-122 in the McGraw Hill paperback)


* 

14-16 *Theories of language, theories of reading:*
**Wednesday 27 May: Theory and the Craving for Generality**

10-12 Wittgenstein on the craving for generality: pp. 16-20 in the Blue book
Moi, “They Practice Their Trades in Different Worlds: Concepts in Poststructuralism and Ordinary Language Philosophy”

*Background reading:* Derrida, “Signature, Event, Context”
*Recommended reading:* Cavell, “Counter-Philosophy and the Pawn of Voice”

---

14-16 Moi, “Thinking Through Examples: What OLP can do for Feminist Theory”
[new paper],
Bauer et al, Introduction [new paper]

*Background reading:* Moi, “From Femininity to Finitude”

---

**Thursday 28 May: Doing Theory Differently**


*Recommended reading:* Bauer’s book

14-16: Moi, “The Adventure of Reading”
Moi, “Hedda’s Silences” (on Hedda Gabler)
Cavell, “A Matter of Meaning It” (on intentions)

---

**Friday 29 May: Reading, Attention, Culture**

10-12 Diamond, “The Difficulty of Reality”
Weil, “On the Right Use of School Studies”
Moi, “Language and attention” [new]

*Background reading:* Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection” in *The Sovereignty of Good*

14-16: General discussion. Where does all this leave us?
Bibliography


