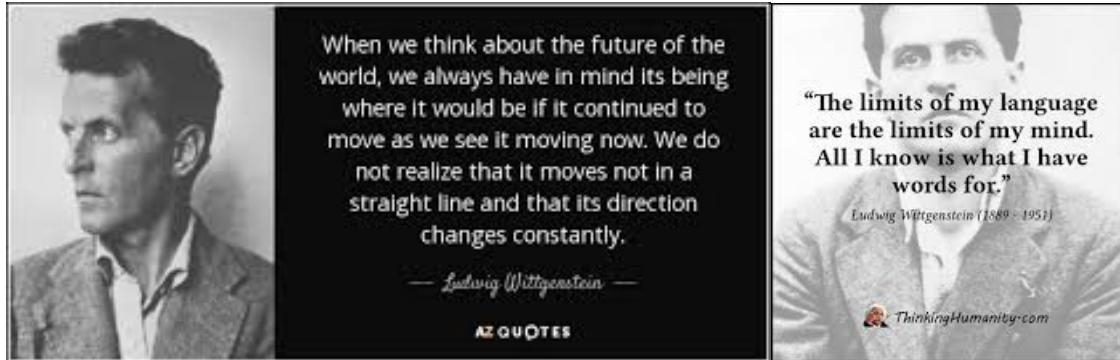


PHIL 291_01
“Seminar in Metaphysics and Epistemology”

Wittgenstein in Conversation

Fall 2018; Tuesday; 6:00-8:45: SH 241,
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Ludwig Wittgenstein is arguably one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century, if not of all times. Many see his later work as being in diametric opposition to the work of Plato, and additionally as providing an end to a certain kind of philosophical methodology. His main works are the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, *The Philosophical Investigations*, and *On Certainty*. We will carefully read portions of each of these works in conversation with Non-Western and Feminist Philosophers. We will also look over the famous Wittgenstein Workbook, a text that was used to teach Wittgenstein’s work in the 20th century. And we will read Ray Monk’s Biography of Wittgenstein, *The Duty of Genius*.

- The main question we will explore is: what is the relation between language, thought, and reality with respect to the nature of the human mind and ways of knowing about reality, such as mathematics and science? Concerning language, thought, and reality, Wittgenstein’s early work, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, offers one picture, his later work, *The Philosophical Investigations*, offers another picture. Concerning the nature of knowledge, Wittgenstein’s work, *On Certainty* and *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* offers us a way of thinking about how to respond to skepticism and how to think about the security of mathematical knowledge.
- Although, we will read core works by Wittgenstein, my goal will be to bring Wittgenstein into conversation with other thinkers, such as Nagarjuna, Zhuangzi, Helen Longino, Elizabeth Anscombe, Alan Turing, and Wilfrid Sellars.
- Students will gain skills in close textual analysis, logical formalization of arguments, critical analysis, and creative thinking.
- Grades will be derived from short essays on passages from Wittgenstein’s works, homework assignments from the Wittgenstein workbook, and essays that engage with thinkers in conversation with Wittgenstein.