

History of Early Analytic Philosophy (Prospective Syllabus)

Course Description

We shall examine the exciting development of “analytic philosophy” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by canvassing the philosophical works of Frege, Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein, and Ayer. The analytic approach reinvigorated philosophy by taking seriously recent developments in logic and mathematics, along with placing great importance on clarity. We shall examine philosophical issues relating to the foundations of logic and mathematics, philosophy of language, the nature of truth, and the status of the sciences. Through the thought of Wittgenstein, we shall also consider the possible limitations of philosophical investigation.

Required Texts

Russell, Bertrand. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1912. ISBN: 978-0-87220-098-2.

Ayer, A. J. *Language, Truth, and Logic*. New York: Dover, 1952.

Recommended Texts

Soames, Scott. *Philosophical analysis in the twentieth century: The Dawn of Analysis*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Schedule of Readings [each “*” corresponds to 1-2 class sessions]

Introduction: Philosophical Insights from the Study of Language and Logic

* Frege, “On Sense and Reference”

* Russell, “On Denoting”

Recommended: Peter Hylton, “The Theory of Descriptions”

Exercise: In a maximum of three pages, first summarize the primary philosophical problem Frege addresses in “On Sense and Reference”, and explain its importance. Then, explain how Frege’s distinction between senses and reference is supposed to solve that problem.

External World Skepticism and Knowledge

* Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapters 1 and 2

* Moore, “Proof of an External World”

Reactions to Idealism

* Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 3 and 4

* F. H. Bradley, “Reality and Thought”

* G. E. Moore, “The Nature of Judgment”

* G. E. Moore, “The Refutation of Idealism”

Frege’s Project and Philosophy of Language

* Selections from Frege; Weiner, “The Project”, “Frege’s New Logic”

* Frege, “The Thought”

Analysis and Atomism

* Moore, Chapter 1 of *Principia Ethica*

* Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 5 and 12

* Russell, "The Relation of Sense-Data to Physics"

Recommended: Ian Hacking, "Bertrand Russell's Acquaintance"

* Wittgenstein, Selections from the *Tractatus*; Thomas Ricketts's "Pictures, Logic, and the Limits of Sense in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*"

Logical Positivism

* Ayer, Chapters 1 and 2

* Ayer, Chapters 3 and 4

* Ayer, Chapters 5 and 6

* Ayer, Chapters 7 and 8

Quine

* "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"; Grice & Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma"

Recommended: Gary Ebbs, "Preliminaries for Understanding Quine's Critique of Analyticity"

* "On What There Is"

* "Epistemology Naturalized"

Paper Prompts

* Summarize and critically assess Moore's case against idealism.

* Analyze and evaluate Moore's "Open Question Argument" as presented in his *Principia Ethica*. Make sure to identify and explain the purported conclusion of the argument, as well as the premises Moore uses to arrive at the conclusion. Consider whether the argument requires that we accept emotivism.

* Explain Ayer's account of meaning in terms of verification, being sure to explain his reconsideration of the issue in the introduction to the second edition of *Language, Truth, and Logic*.

* Summarize Quine's objections to the analytic-synthetic distinction, as well as Grice & Strawson's defense of it: who do you think has the more convincing case and why?