

PHIL 450: Major Philosophers 1: Bertrand Russell

Instructor: Jessica Pepp

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 11:30-1:30

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Course Location and Time: Leacock Building 110, Tuesday and Thursday 10:05-11:25.

Course Description:

In this course, we will make a detailed study of two important works by the twentieth century British philosopher Bertrand Russell. The two works will be Russell's introductory (but substantive) book, *The Problems of Philosophy* (1912) and the text of a series of lectures, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* (1918). These works make up only a small part of Russell's prodigious corpus, but they provide a useful starting point for understanding the development of Russell's epistemological and metaphysical views, as well as the connections between the two. Our primary focus will be on these aspects of Russell's philosophy, though we will also examine their interrelation with Russell's philosophy of language, and with his methodology of logical analysis. The primary method of the course will be direct engagement with Russell's texts, though we will also pay some attention to Russell's intellectual origins and influences, and to the ongoing importance of his work in contemporary philosophy.

The course does not presuppose experience with specific philosophical topics. However, students who have not taken at least one 300 or 400 level course in some area of analytic philosophy, as well as at least an introductory course in logic, may find the material very difficult.

Course Materials:

The primary texts for this course are:

- Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, (London: Williams and Norgate, 1912; with a new introduction by John Perry, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).
- Bertrand Russell, *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, ed. David Pears, (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985). (Originally published 1918 in *The Monist*.)

Both books are available at Paragraphe Bookstore, 2220 McGill College Ave.

Occasionally, additional required readings will be made available online through WebCT. Students must have web access in order to download these readings.

Format:

This course will combine a lecture and seminar format. One class in each week will be a lecture; the other will be a seminar, sometimes led by a student or students. All students must engage with the material in reading, writing, **and speaking**. Seminar presentations in class will be part of your grade. (See "Presentations" below.)

Assignments and Evaluation:

Your grade for the course will be determined on the following basis:

Paper	40%
Take-home final	55%
Seminar presentation	5%
Weekly reading questions	two free misses; two points deducted from final mark for each additional miss.

The paper will be assigned on February 17, 2011 and will be due by email to jessica.pepp@mcgill.ca before the start of class on Thursday, March 3, 2011. The take-home final will take the form of a longer paper and will be due on the date assigned by the University.

Seminar Presentations: Each student will be required to lead one seminar session during the course. As part of this requirement, you must prepare a handout for the session. Further instructions will be provided in class. (Depending on final enrollment, it is possible that students will be required to present jointly with other students.)

Weekly reading questions: Each week by Sunday 10 PM, you must email to me three questions about things you found puzzling in the assigned reading for the week. This requirement begins just before the start of Week 3, on Sunday, January 16. You may miss up to two weeks of submitting reading questions; after that each miss will result in two points deducted from your final mark for the course.

McGill Policy Statements:

1) Academic Integrity

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/> for more information).

2) English or French submission of graded work

In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

3) Students with disabilities

If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the **Office for Students with Disabilities** at 398-6009 (online at <http://www.mcgill.ca/osd>) before you do this.

4) Additional information

Additional policies governing academic issues which affect students can be found in the **McGill Charter of Students' Rights** (Chapter One of the Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook available as a PDF on (<http://www.mcgill.ca/files/secretariat/Student-Handbook-2009-English.pdf>).

5) Extraordinary circumstances

In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University's control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change. (see <http://www.mcgill.ca/health/>)

Schedule of Topics (Tentative)

(In the chart below, *The Problems of Philosophy* is referred to by "PP". *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* is referred to by "PLA".)

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
1	4 & 6 Jan.	Introduction to the course & historical background	<p>Optional: G.E. Moore, "The Nature of Judgment, <i>Mind</i>, New Series, Vol. 8, No. 30 (Apr. 1899)</p> <p><i>*This reading will be made available through WebCT.</i></p>
2	11 & 13 Jan.	Russell pre-1905, and the Theory of Descriptions	<p>Russell, <i>The Principles of Mathematics</i>, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903, chapters IV and V</p> <p>Optional: Russell, "On Denoting" Useful background reading (also optional): Scott Soames, <i>Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century: vol. 1 The Dawn of Analysis</i>, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003, chapter 5</p> <p><i>*These readings will be made available through WebCT.</i></p>
3	18 & 20 Jan.	Nature and existence of the external world	PP , chapters 1-4
4	25 & 27 Jan.	Varieties of knowledge	PP , chapters 5-8

Week	Dates	Topic	Readings
5	1 & 3 Feb.	Universals	PP, chapters 9-10
6	8 & 10 Feb.	Is knowledge possible? *First paper assigned (10 Feb.)	PP, chapters 11-13
7	15 & 17 Feb.	Limits & value of philosophy	PP, chapters 14-15
February 21 -25: READING WEEK			
8	1 & 3 Mar.	Methodology of PLA; analysis of facts and propositions *First paper due (1 Mar.)	PLA, lectures I&II
9	8 & 10 Mar.	Forms of facts and propositions	PLA, lectures III & IV
10	15 & 17 Mar.	Language and ontology	PLA, lectures V & VI
11	22 & 24 Mar.	PLA in perspective	PLA, lectures VII & VIII
12	29 & 31 Mar.	Russell's influence	TBA
13	5 & 7 Apr.	Conclusion & Review	no new reading