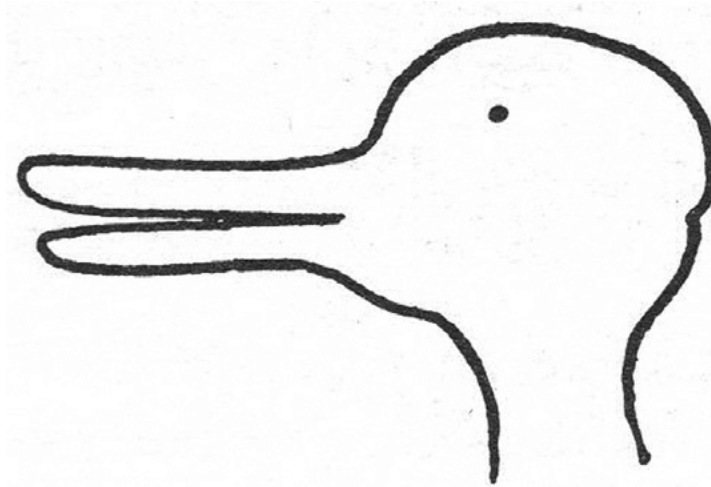


**PHIL 4970 Capstone Seminar**

MW 2:00pm-3:20pm  
(permission required)

Dr. David M. Kaplan



Around 1960, English language philosophy started to take an interpretive turn away from narrow issues of epistemology to broader issues of culture. The turn can be traced back to Wittgenstein's criticism of his 1920's logical positivism; to Heidegger's transformation of phenomenology (of consciousness) to fundamental ontology (of being and our being-in-the-world); and to Dewey's affirmation of practice over theory.

By the 1980s, interpretation theory was firmly established in philosophy, literary criticism, cultural anthropology, historiography, and feminism. But questions remained:

1. What is interpretation?
2. What makes one interpretation better or more correct than another interpretation?
3. If interpretations are fallible and there is nothing to appeal to that is not an interpretation, are interpretations relativistic and ethnocentric?
4. If interpretations do not presuppose standards of universal reason or impartial evidence, do they become nihilistic or the result of sheer power and authority?

This class will start by examining Ludwig Wittgenstein's conceptions of language; the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer; Habermas and argumentation; Rorty and conversational philosophy. These philosophers discuss the relationship between reason and action, consensus and incommensurability, and social action and social criticism.

This class will provide you with a good lens to understand contemporary debates concerning anything that is open to interpretation – everything except *maybe* math and logic.

Texts: PDFs posted on class Canvas site

**Requirements:** First, you are expected to attend every class. Second, you are expected to have read the assigned readings before every class. Third, you are expected to participate in every class by asking relevant questions, making appropriate comments, and participating in the discussion groups. No open laptops in class, please.

Your grade will be based on 11, 1-2 page (single-spaced) summaries of the assigned readings and class participation.

Paper 90%  
Participation 10%

### Reading schedule

January 23-25	Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus</i> , 1- 7
January 30-Feb 1	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§ 1-88
February 6-8	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§ 138-9, 143, 145-7, 185-6, 198-202, 206-7, 217-219, 237, 240-242
February 13-15	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§ 202, 237, 243-244, 246, 248, 253, 258-9, 265, 270, 272, 291, 293, 296-299, 304
February 20-22	Gadamer, "Classical and Philosophical Hermeneutics"
February 27-March 1	Gadamer, "Elements of a Theory of Hermeneutic Experience"
March 6-7	Gadamer, "Hermeneutics as Practical Philosophy"
<b>March 13-15</b>	<b>Spring Break</b>
March 20-22	Habermas, <i>Theory of Communicative Action</i> , pp. 1-42
March 27-29	Habermas, "Social Action and Responsibility"
April 3-5	Habermas, "The Tasks of a Critical Theory of Society"
April 10-12	Rorty, <i>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</i> , pp. 3-43
April 17-19	Rorty, <i>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</i> , pp. 44-95
April 24-24	Rorty, <i>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</i> , pp. 189-198
May 1	End

- Students are responsible for reading, understanding and knowing UNT's Academic Dishonesty Policy that can be found at: <http://www.vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>
- The University of North Texas is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112 – The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens.

Drop/Withdrawal Information, and other important Academic Dates can be found at <http://essc.unt.edu/registrar/schedule/scheduleclass.html>