Course Description

The subject of this course is the extremely close relationship between a number of themes in philosophical logic and philosophy of language in Frege’s later work and in the early Stoics. There will be two different academic components to the course, which are intertwined.

The first component is philosophical: The course provides an introduction (i) to the main elements of Stoic logic and philosophy of language and (ii) to Frege’s late papers (especially ‘Thought’, ‘Negation’ and ‘Compound Thought’) and the parallels to these in his posthumous work. Topics include non-propositional content including commands, exclamations, and questions; assertoric contents; contents with indexicals; negation and contradictories, logical connectives, conditionals, quantified propositions, and inference. The essay “Frege plagiarized the Stoics” (‘plagiarism’) will serve as a guidance through the topics, but all sessions will go markedly beyond the content of that essay. While ‘plagiarism’ focuses
primarily on the similarities between Stoic logic and Frege’s philosophy, in class we will concentrate more strongly on philosophical questions and on the differences between Stoic logic and Frege’s theories. These discrepancies, though not all readily apparent, are philosophically substantial. By comparing and contrasting the theories we hope to achieve a greater insight in either philosophical theory.

The second component is the study of methodological issues in the history of philosophy: Both Stoic logic and Frege’s late work contain considerable methodological problems on their own. A large part of Stoic logic writings is lost and their reconstruction from later sources is full of challenges. By contrast, in Frege’s late work we often find the same topic discussed repeatedly, but with slight variations, and the question recurs whether Frege had one unified theory or whether we witness a development. The main methodological questions concern what we do (can do, cannot do) when we compare philosophical theories from different eras and cultures. The course compares partially reconstructed theories from the third century BCE, written in Greek, as preserved in texts up to the 6th century in Greek and Latin, with texts written in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in antiquated German, strongly influenced by 19th century German philosophy. And we do all this in English. What ways and channels does philosophical information travel through the centuries? How can we establish similarities across languages and cultures? What are the requirements for us to establish that a 19th/20th century philosopher was influenced by an ancient school? What are the conditions for us to establish whether a philosopher plagiarized thinkers from a different era? What were the customs of working with sources at the time? What did other 19th century philosophers write on the relevant topics? How should plagiarism be defined here? Why and in what respects would it even matter to us whether Frege “borrowed from” some ancient philosophers?

Required Texts: Most of the readings will be accessible online. Some texts will be provided as PDFs.

Participation Requirements: No knowledge of Greek, Latin, or German is required. Such knowledge can’t hurt either. Ideally we have some participants with competence in Greek and perhaps Latin, and some with competence in German. It is in the nature of the topic that questions of how to translate specific terms or sentences can be crucial to our understanding. We will work as a team, drawing on the various skills of different participants.

Course Requirements: None beyond attendance and participation (I’ve been told). Students are occasionally encouraged to look at some of the non-obligatory readings (ideally in pairs) and possibly offer written summaries, the idea being that in this way we as a group in discussion can draw from a larger pool of knowledge.

Enrolment: 25

[Accessibility Policy: If you require any accommodation for a disability, please contact and register with Disability Services. Note that you can contact them directly by phone at (609) 258-8840 or by email at ods@princeton.edu. And please feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns.]

Class Schedule:

Session 1: Historical background and data. (31 January)
Reading for the first session:

Pages 149-55, 202-04 (= Sections I, II, IV) from:


All (1¼) pages of:


This is an English summary of the German article:


LINK HERE: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01445340903340058

(If someone who reads German and has too much time on their hands were to look at this before the first session, that would be great.)

Session 2: Complete and incomplete content (7 February)

Reading: Select passages from Diogenes Laertius, Sextus Empiricus, Frege ‘Sense and Reference’, ‘Thought’ and ‘Logic’ (posthumous), most of these texts are given in original language and translation in ‘plagiarism’, Sections III.1.1 and III.1.2

Session 3: Imperatives, exclamations, and other non-propositional complete contents (14 February)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Sections III.1.2.2-III.1.2.6

Session 4: Assertoric content (21 February)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Sections III.1.2, III.1.2.1 and from Frege ‘Thought’

Session 5: Content with demonstratives and indexicals (28 February)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Section III.1.2.6; some additional relevant passages from Alexander of Aphrodisias on Stoic logic and from Frege ‘Thought’

Session 6: Negation, double negation, and contradictories (6 March)
Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Sections III.1.3, III.1.3.1, III.1.3.1.1, III.1.3.1.2, III.1.3.1.3 and III.1.3.1.4. Frege ‘Negation’

Session 7: Conjunctions and disjunctions (20 March)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Sections III.1.3.2, III.1.3.2.1 and III.1.3.2.2.

Session 8: Conditionals and causal connectives (27 March)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Section III.1.3, III.1.3.2.3 and III.1.3.2.4, supplemented with brief passages from 19th century German logic texts

Session 9: Quantified propositions (3 April)

Reading: Select passages as provided in ‘plagiarism’ Section III.1.3, III.1.4

Session 10: Inference (10 April)

Reading: Select brief passages from Diogenes, Sextus, Galen, and Frege Begriffsschrift, Basic Laws, ‘Logic in Mathematics’, ‘Compound Thought’, ‘Logical Generality’, ‘Correspondence’

Session 11: Non-Fregean 19th century logic (17 April)

Reading: Select passages from J.S. Mill 1843, DeMorgan 1847, Boole 1854, Bolzano 1837, Husserl varia, Sigwart 1873, Ulrici 1852

Session 12: Plagiarism (24 April)

Reading: ‘plagiarism’ Section IV, some basic literature on defining plagiarism

General introductory reading:

Primary texts:

- The most relevant primary texts both from Stoic logic and from Frege’s work are all cited in their original language and in translation in “Frege plagiarized the Stoics”. Some additional texts will be provided for Sessions 2-11.

Secondary reading (optional!):

Stoic logic, useful introductions. Any one of these will do:

- Chapter ‘Stoic logic’ in Mary Louise Gill & Pierre Pellegrin (eds) A Companion to Ancient Philosophy
- Chapter ‘Stoic logic’ in Brad Inwood (ed), Cambridge Companion to Stoic Philosophy
- Chapter ‘La logique des Stoïciennes’ in J.-B. Gourinat and J. Barnes (eds.), Lire les Stoïciennes, Paris (Vrin)
- The chapter on Stoic and Megaric logic in Martha & William Kneale, The Development of Logic

Frege:

Some introductory books on Frege:

- Michael Beaney *The Frege Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing 1997 is worth acquiring (secondhand copies galore for sale) since it provides English translations of most of the philosophically relevant works by Frege. It’s just important to keep in mind that the translations chosen are not always reliable. It also contains an easy-to-read useful introduction.


- Weiner, Joan, *Frege Explained* (Ideas Explained) Chicago: Open Court 2004. (= the previous item, expanded by two chapters, and with helpful additional chapter headings.)
