Frege’s Philosophy
Course Outline and Selected Reading

The main text for this course is:
This contains a selection of Frege’s writings, including all his important articles and excerpts from all three of his major books. Of these books, the most accessible is:
Frege, Gottlob, (FA) The Foundations of Arithmetic (Koebner, 1884), tr. J. L. Austin (Blackwell, 1950)

I provide an introduction to Frege’s philosophy, focusing on his notion of sense, in:
Beaney, Michael, (FMS) Frege: Making Sense (Duckworth, 1996)
A much shorter introduction can be found in FR, pp. 1-46; and for more recent introductions, see:
Beaney, Michael, Chen Bo and Koji Nakatogawa, (FLP) ‘Frege, his Logic and his Philosophy: Interview with Michael Beaney’, World Philosophy, 3 (2010), tr. into Chinese. Also publ. in English in Journal of Graduate School of Letters, Hokkaido University, Japan, 2010, online at: let.hokudai.ac.jp/en/archive
Beaney, Michael, (F) ‘Frege’, in Barry Lee, ed., Philosophy of Language: The Key Thinkers (Continuum, 2011), ch. 1

For other book-length introductions to Frege’s philosophy, I recommend:
Textor, Mark, (FSR) Frege on Sense and Reference (Routledge, 2011)
Weiner, Joan, (FE) Frege Explained (Open Court, 2004)
The definitive collection of papers on Frege published from 1986 to 2005 is:

Further essays can be found in:

Several useful papers on Frege are also contained in:

Further reading on each topic is provided in the relevant section below. I have starred the essential primary texts and my suggestions for what you might read first.
(1) Introduction

Topics
Frege’s life and works; Frege’s place in the history of philosophy; analytic philosophy and the linguistic turn

📖 Reading
*FR, ‘Introduction’, § 1 (pp. 1-10)
Beaney, Michael, FMS, ‘Introduction’
*Beaney, Michael, Chen Bo and Koji Nakatogawa, FLP
Burge, Tyler, ‘Gottlob Frege: some forms of influence’, in OHHAP
Gabriel, Gottfried, ‘Frege and the German background to analytic philosophy’, in OHHAP

(2) Frege’s revolution in logic

Topics
Frege’s use of function–argument analysis; invention of quantifier notation; treatment of generality; logical form and grammatical form; existential import

📖 Reading
*FR, ‘Introduction’, § 2 (pp. 10-14); ‘Begriffsschrift’, Preface, §§ 3, 9 (pp. 48-52, 53-4, 65-8); App. 2
Beaney, Michael, FMS, chs. 1-2, esp. §§ 2.2, 2.4
*____, F, § 2
Textor, Mark, FSR, chs. 2-3
Weiner, Joan, FE, ch. 3

(3) Logic and conceptual content

Topics
relationship between logic and language; conceptual content and logical equivalence; interpretive analysis

📖 Reading
*FR, ‘Begriffsschrift’, Preface, §§ 3, 8 (pp. 48-52, 53-4, 64-5); ‘Logic’, esp. pp. 239-44
Beaney, Michael, FMS, § 2.5
(4) Concept and object

Topics

objects/first-level concepts/second-level concepts; problem of the unity of the proposition; paradox of the concept horse; interpretive analysis

Reading

*FR, ‘Letter to Marty’ (pp. 79-83); ‘Function and Concept’ (pp. 130-48); ‘On Concept and Object’ (pp. 181-93)

Beaney, Michael, FMS, §§ 7.1, 7.3

*__, F, § 3

Oliver, Alex, 2010, ‘What is a predicate?’, in CCF, pp. 118-48

Weiner, Joan, FE, ch. 5; ch. 6, pp. 103-14


(5) Frege’s analysis of number statements

Topics

Frege’s logicism; Frege’s critique of alternative views; number statements as assertions about concepts; interpretive analysis

Reading


*FA, ‘Introduction’ and §§ 1-54 (pp. i-ix, 1-67)

Beaney, Michael, FMS, ch. 3; § 4.1


Weiner, Joan, *FE*, chs. 2, 4

**(6) The context principle and Russell’s paradox**

*Topics*
numbers as objects; context principle; contextual definition; abstraction principles; Russell’s paradox; Platonism vs. eliminativism about abstract objects

*Reading*

*FR*, ‘Introduction’, § 3, pp. 14-21; ‘The Foundations of Arithmetic’, pp. 105-129; ‘Grundgesetze, I’, Pref. (pp. 194-208); ‘Letter to Russell, 22.6.1902’ (pp. 253-4); ‘Grundgesetze, II’, §§ 146-7 and App. (pp. 277-89); ‘Sources of Knowledge’ and ‘Numbers and Arithmetic’ (pp. 368-73)

Beaney, Michael, *FMS*, §§ 4.2, 4.3, 7.2, 8.2
Weiner, Joan, *FE*, ch. 7

**(7) Analysis and definition**

*Topics*
paradox of analysis; constructive vs. analytic definitions; idea of reconstruction

*Reading*

*FR*, ‘The Foundations of Arithmetic’, § 88 (p. 122); ‘Review of Husserl’ (pp. 224-6); ‘Logic in Mathematics’, esp. pp. 313-21

Beaney, Michael, *FMS*, §§ 4.4, 4.5; ch. 5; § 8.5; App. 2
(8) The problem of identity statements

Topics
problems in the early notion of conceptual content; the informativeness of identity statements

Reading
*FR, ‘Introduction’, § 3, pp. 21-30; ‘Begriffsschrift’, § 8 (pp. 64-5); ‘Function and Concept’, esp. pp. 130-8; ‘On Sinn and Bedeutung’ (pp. 151-71)

Beaney, Michael, FMS, §§ 6.1, 6.2


*____, F, § 5


Textor, Mark, FSR, ch. 4

(9) Sense and reference: sentences

Topics
application of the distinction to sentences; extensional and intensional contexts

Reading
*FR, ‘Introduction’ § 4 (pp. 36-46; tr. into Chinese, World Philosophy, 2 (2008), pp. 14-24); ‘Letter to Husserl, 24.5.1891’ (pp. 149-50); ‘On Sinn and Bedeutung’
(pp. 151-71); ‘Letter to Russell, 28.12.1902’ (pp. 255-7); ‘Letter to Russell, 13.11.1904’ (pp. 290-2); ‘Introduction to Logic’ (pp. 293-8)

Beaney, Michael, *FMS*, §§ 6.2, 6.5

*____, *F*, §§ 6, 9

Kremer, Michael, 2010, ‘Sense and reference: the origins and development of the distinction’, in *CCF*, §§ 7-8 (pp. 261-78)


Textor, Mark, *FSR*, ch. 6

Weiner, Joan, *FE*, ch. 6, pp. 89-103

(10) Sense and reference: singular terms

Topics

application of the distinction to singular terms; senses without referents; referential vs. descriptive theories of proper names

Reading

*FR*, ‘On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*’ (pp. 151-71); ‘Letter to Russell, 28.12.1902’ (pp. 255-7); ‘Letter to Russell, 13.11.1904’ (pp. 290-2); ‘Letter to Jourdain, Jan. 1914’ (pp. 319-21); App. 2, p. 385

Beaney, Michael, *FMS*, §§ 6.3, 6.4

*____, *F*, § 8

Dummett, Michael, 1981, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*, 2nd ed. (Duckworth), chs. 5-6


Kremer, Michael, 2010, ‘Sense and reference: the origins and development of the distinction’, in *CCF*, § 6 (pp. 258-61)


Russell, Bertrand, 1919, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (George Allen and Unwin), chs. 15-16

Textor, Mark, *FSR*, ch. 5

(11) Sense and reference: concept words

Topics

application of the distinction to functional expressions
Reading
*FR, ‘Letter to Husserl, 24.5.1891’ (pp. 149-50); ‘[Comments on Sinn and Bedeutung]’ (pp. 172-80)
Beaney, Michael, FMS, § 7.1
*____, F, § 7
Textor, Mark, FSR, ch. 7

(12) Indexicality

Topics
criteria for sameness of thought; the problem of indexicals

Reading
*FR, ‘Introduction’, § 3, pp. 30-6; ‘Logic’, esp. pp. 227-39; ‘A Brief Survey of my Logical Doctrines’ (pp. 299-300); ‘Letters to Husserl, 1906’ (pp. 301-7); ‘Thought’ (pp. 325-45)
*Beaney, Michael, FMS, §§ 7.4, 7.5, 8.1
____, F, § 9

(13) Thought and objectivity

Topics
objectivity and communicability; Platonism about thoughts; compositionality

Reading
FR, ‘Introduction’, § 3, pp. 30-1; ‘Logic’, esp. pp. 227-39; ‘My Basic Logical Insights’ (pp. 322-4); ‘Thought’ (pp. 325-45)
Beaney, Michael, FMS, § 7.5; ch. 8


Kremer, Michael, 2010, ‘Sense and reference: the origins and development of the distinction’, in CCF, § 9 (pp. 278-92)


Weiner, Joan, FE, ch. 9

(14) Frege and philosophy of language

Topics
Frege as philosopher of language

Reading
Beaney, Michael, FMS, ch. 6; §§ 7.4, 7.5; ch. 8


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