

Paul Feyerabend's philosophy of science

John Dougherty

WiSe 2026/27

Meeting:	Fridays, 14:00–16:00 (s.t.) Ludwigstr. 31, Room 021
Office Hours:	Thursdays, 15:00–17:00 Ludwigstr. 31, Room 131
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Description

Paul K. Feyerabend (1924–1994) was an Austrian philosopher who worked on a broad set of topics in philosophy of science, including explanation, reduction, empiricism, scientific method, realism, and meaning. In this course, we will read a selection of papers and book chapters by Feyerabend on these topics.

Assessment

You may choose from the following two options for assessment:

Presentation & essay You will give a 15 minute presentation at the start of one meeting of the course and then lead a 45 minute discussion of the reading. The presentation should set out the main contributions of the reading, contextualize them, and raise questions for discussion. It should involve beamer slides or a handout. At the end of term, you will submit a written version of the presentation of 2000 words. Your mark for the course will be based on the presentation and essay.

Term paper You will submit a term paper at the end of the semester. Your paper should be on a philosophical topic related to Feyerabend's work. Near the end of the semester I will distribute a list of suggested questions and grading criteria. You may write your paper on a topic not on that list; if you do, then I recommend speaking to me before writing the paper, so that I can advise on the topic and scope of your planned alternative. The term paper should be 3000 words for BA students and 6000 words for MA students.

Either way, to receive credit for this course, you must register through LSF during the registration period (11.01.–22.01.2027) and submit all materials to me by email by the term paper deadline (22.03.2027). Please note that extensions of this deadline are not up to me; if you need an extension, please contact Fabian Widerna (f.widerna@lmu.de) at the Prüfungsamt für Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften (PAGS).

The essay or term paper material should be written in 12pt font, with 1.5 spacing, 3cm margins on the left and right, and a standard academic typeface (e.g., Computer Modern, Times New Roman, Palatino, Calibri, etc.). It should be in English, the language of instruction for this course.

Resources

Questions about the administration of philosophy teaching at LMU should be directed to Thomas Wyrwich (thomas.wyrwich@lrz.uni-muenchen.de). The Erasmus coordinator for philosophy at LMU is Peter Adamson (office.peter.adamson@lrz.uni-muenchen.de). The list of women's representatives (Frauenbeauftragte) for the Philosophy Faculty can be found on the Faculty's webpage (www.philosophie.uni-muenchen.de/fakultaet/frauenbeauftragte/index.html); the representatives for the MCMP are Vanessa Carr and Sophie Kikkert. Issues regarding the economic, social, and cultural aspects of student life—including studying with a child or studying with a disability—are the responsibility of the Munich Student Union (<https://www.studentenwerk-muenchen.de>).

Schedule and readings

All texts are available on LSF. A complete bibliography of Feyerabend's work is available at the PKF Centennial website (<https://www.pkfcentennial.org>), which also hosts recordings of some of Feyerabend's lectures and other

16.10. Introduction

*26.10. [RESCHEDULED] An attempt at a realistic interpretation of experience (1957)

30.10. Explanation, reduction and empiricism (1962), Introduction through §4

06.11. Explanation, reduction and empiricism (1962), §5 through end

13.11. How to be a good empiricist: a plea for tolerance in matters epistemological (1963)

*16.11. [RESCHEDULE] Against method (1970), Preface through §4

27.11. Against method (1970), §§5–10

04.12. Against method (1970), §11 through end

11.12. Consolations for the specialist (1970)

18.12. On the critique of scientific reason (1976)

08.01. Changing patterns of reconstruction [Review of W. Stegmüller, *Probleme und Resultate Analytischen Philosophie*. Band 2: *Theorie und Erfahrung*, Zweiter Halbband: *Theorienstrukturen und Theoriendynamik*.] (1977)

15.01. *Science in a Free Society* (1978), Part Two, §§1–10

22.01. Science as art (1984)

29.01. Mach's theory of research and its relation to Einstein (1984)

05.02. *Three Dialogues on Knowledge* (1991), third dialogue

* Rescheduled course meetings will be held 14:00–16:00 in Ludwigstr. 31, Room 028.