

PHIL246. 01 Philosophy of Language

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Synopsis:

The course will look at central issues in the philosophy of language and how philosophy of language can help us understand linguistic discourse in a variety of domains. In particular, we will look at how philosophers have attempted to explain notions such as communication, meaning, reference, and truth and how this helps us understand more applied issues concerning political discourse.

Goals

The first goal is to develop your understanding of central issues in the philosophy of language. This involves developing an understanding of reference, truth, meaning, semantics, speech acts, and related concepts. The second goal is to improve your skills at philosophical argumentation and writing.

Grading

50% of your grade will come from a midterm (20%) and a final exam (30%). The midterm will be on March 2nd in class and the final will be on May 3rd at 3pm. 30% of your grade will come from two 3-4 page papers (weighted evenly). Your first paper will be due on February 15th and your second paper will be due on April 23rd at the beginning of class. Papers will be graded on the grounds of ability to clearly explain the material you are writing about and original argumentation. Original argumentation will be evaluated in terms of its existence (is there any?) and plausibility (how well does it stand up to criticism?). I encourage you to take risks within reason. Don't think you can come up with a new theory of reference in 2-3 pages, but do try to critique arguments, and propose solutions to smaller problems. (I take grading papers to be something like scoring diving: both the difficulty of the project and the quality of the execution are taken into account). 20% of your grade will come from class participation. Participation will be determined by attendance, preparedness (having read the assigned readings before class with questions in mind), discussion, and short homework assignments. If you miss a class you should always contact me to see what you missed and what the next assignment is. (Note: there will be no classes or office hours on February 3rd, 17th, April 4th, 6th, and 20th.)

Unpleasant Miscellany

Late Policy

A third of a letter grade will be removed for every 24 hour period that the paper is late. After 5 days, no late paper will be accepted (this includes weekends). Extensions for medical reasons will only be granted with written notice from Health Services. If you need to miss class or need an extension for religious reasons please let me know in advance.

Laptops and Phones

Laptops are not permitted in class. Cell phone use is also not permitted (this includes reading and sending texts). Please turn your cell phone off before class. If I see you using a cell phone I will ask you to leave the class. Repeated cell phone usage in class will result

in participation grade reductions.

There is emerging some excellent data suggesting that students who multi-task do significantly worse (statistically speaking) than those who don't. Another recent study shows that 'heavy' multi-taskers are actually (1) worse at switching between tasks and (2) more prone to distraction than those who don't multi-task. (I'd be happy to send you links upon request). In short, we all think we're pretty good at multi-tasking but we really aren't.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism of any sort is not tolerated. Always cite sources in your papers even if you paraphrase them. All suspected cases of plagiarism will be reported to the Honor Council. For more on correct citation, see:

<http://studentorgs.vanderbilt.edu/HonorCouncil/infostud.php>

Citations

You are expected to use a *system* of citation in your essays. That is, use a recognized citation guide (MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.) and use it consistently. If you're not sure where to start, the Chicago Author-Date system is very nice and you can find a summary of its rules under "Manuscript Presentation" at:

http://www.oxfordjournals.org/our_journals/analys/for_authors/

Office Hours

You are highly encouraged to come to office hours to discuss anything. You are especially encouraged to come to office hours if you have missed a class, are having problems with the course material (some of which is very difficult), or working on a paper. I am also available for office hours by appointment but I request that you give me at least 24 hours notice for this. If our schedules conflict too much I can also meet with you over Skype.

Readings:

As there are no textbook for this course, most readings will be made available on OAK as PDF files. You are expected to print these out and bring them to class. One required book is Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*. An optional book is William Lycan's *Philosophy of Language*. While I won't be assigning reading from this book aside from the first chapter, it is a very clear introduction to this difficult subject and you might find it useful if you are struggling with some material.

I should say that we probably will not get through all of the material below. Pace will be largely set by class discussion and interest. I'll reserve the right to replace a reading with a similar one if I think it will better facilitate class discussion or student interest, but I will not add more material. Also readings that end with a '*' are harder than normal and readings marked with a '**' are even harder than those. On occasions when you have to approach these plan to spend two to three times as long figuring out the material before class. I have marked readings in regards to what I think currently looks hard for me and you might disagree in several places. It's

always good to explore some of the articles in advance that you plan on reading, but hopefully this rough guideline will help. I've also included some readings which concern the application of Philosophy of language to other areas of philosophy as well as social issues. These are marked by a hammer because philosophy of language is being used as a tool for other purposes.

Section I: Communication and Honesty: Why even care about how language works?

Grice, H. P. 1957. Meaning. *The Philosophical Review*. 66: 377-388.*

Frankfurt, H. 1986. "On Bullshit".

Section II: Logic for Reading Knowledge Part I: Sentential Logic and First-Order Predicate Logic

Class Notes and Homework Assignment 1.

Section III: How to Refer to Things with Words: Picking out Things in the World

Mill, J.S. 1843. Of Names. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 17-29. Blackwell: Oxford. 2006.

Lycan, W. 2008. Meaning and Reference. In *Philosophy of Language*. (2nd Ed.). 1-6.

Frege, G. 1892. On Sense and Reference. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 29-42. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.*

Russell, B. 1905. On Denoting. *Mind*. 14: 479-493.**

Russell, B. 1919. Descriptions. In *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. *

Homework Assignment 2

Strawson 1950 On Referring in *Mind*. 59: 320-344.

Donnellan 1966. Reference and Definite Descriptions. *Philosophical Review*. 75: 281-304.

Section IV: Logic for Reading Knowledge Part II: Modal Logic

Class Notes and Homework Assignment 3

Section V: A New Theory of Naming: Kripke's Naming and Necessity and some Applications

Kripke, S. 1973. Lecture I of *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard: Cambridge.**

Kripke, S. 1973. Lecture II of *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard: Cambridge.**

Kripke, S. 1973. Lecture III of *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard: Cambridge.**

Putnam, H. 1973. Meaning and Reference. *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 70, No. 19. 699-711.*



Putnam, H. 1981. Brains in a Vat. In *Reason, Truth, and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge. 1-21.**

Section VI: How to Do Things with Words: Speech Acts, Implicature, Oppression, and Racial Epithets

Austin, J.L. "Performative Utterances". Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 43-58. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.*

Searle, J. Meaning. 1970. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 77-86. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.

Grice, H.P. 1975. Logic and Conversastion. in *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge: Havard. 22-40.*

 McGowan, M. 2009. Oppressive Speech. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*. 87: 389 – 407.*

 Richard, M. 2008. Epithets and Attitudes. in *Truth Gives Out*. Oxford: Oxford. 12-41.*

 Hom, C. 2008. The Semantics of Racial Epithets. *Journal of Philosophy*. 426-440.**

Section VII: What does it all mean?: Meaning, Truth, and Interpretation

Locke, J. 1690. Of Words. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 9-17. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.

Grice, H. P. 1957. Meaning. *The Philosophical Review*, 66: 377-388.* (Review)

Davidson, D. Radical Interpretation. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 89-115. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.**

Soames, S. Semantics and Semantic Competence. Reprinted in *Reading Philosophy of Language*, ed. J. Hornsby and G. Longworth, 115-128. Oxford: Blackwell. 2006.**

Section VIII: Philosophy is like.....: Two Accounts of Metaphor

Searle, J. 1979. Metaphor. In *Metaphor and Thought*. Ed. A. Ortony, 92-123. Cambridge: Cambridge.

Davidson, D. 1978. What Metaphors Mean. In *On Metaphor*. Ed. S Sacks, 29-46. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.