

Philosophy of Language (Upper Division)

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Course Description:

In this course, we will study some classic texts in the philosophy of language. Some of the keywords are: *meaning, reference, truth, communication*. We will survey different answers to questions like: What is the meaning of a word (be it a proper name, a definite description, or an indexical)? How is the meaning of a sentence determined? What is the relation between belief reports and beliefs? What does it mean to have a semantic theory of a language? What resources does one need in order to generate such a theory? The class begins with the study of Frege and Russell, who were the first contemporary philosophers to ask the questions that interest us, and who also gave us two of the major theories still being discussed today. We will then look at some objections to their theories, along with proposed changes and adaptations. Other philosophers responded to Frege and Russell by pointing out that they ignored important aspects of the essential function of language as a tool for communication. They pointed out that what speakers say often depends on the purpose and thrust of the conversation, on speakers' intentions, and on certain general norms, implicitly governing any and all conversations. We will then discuss how these facts can be accounted for and how they can be integrated in a more comprehensive theory of meaning, language, and communication.

The class will be spent discussing the original texts. I will assign no secondary readings, though those in need would do well to consult any relevant articles from the excellent Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, and, if you end up interested in a particular topic, I would be more than happy to point you in the direction of more texts. An Introduction to Logic class is required.

Overview:

We will cover six major topics in this course:

- Proper Names and Definite Descriptions
- The Semantic Content of Singular Terms
- Theories of Reference
- Propositional Attitudes
- Pragmatics
- Truth and Meaning

Course Requirements:

Students are expected to regularly attend lectures and sections. There will be four essay assignments for this course, worth 20%, 20%, 25%, and 30%, respectively. Essay assignments will be due on the following dates:

1st Essay: 1/31, at 5:00pm.

2nd Essay: 2/28, at 5:00pm.

3rd Essay: 3/28, at 5:00pm.

4th Essay: 5/9, no later than 5:00pm (this is the date our final exam is scheduled; and the final exam is a take-home exam.)

Late papers will be accepted up to one week after the due date and will be marked down 1/3 of a grade point (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for each 24 hour-period of lateness. Section participation is worth 5% of the full grade and can make a real difference in borderline cases.

Texts:

- Martinich, Aloysius, P., ed. *The Philosophy of Language*, 4th ed. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001. ISBN: 0195135431.
- The other required readings have been collected in a packet that can be bought at the bookstore.

Schedule of Readings:

The schedule is subject to change. Revisions will be announced in class and posted on the course website.

I. Proper Names and Definite Descriptions

Week 1	1/10	Introduction
	1/12	Frege: "On Sense and Nominatum"
Week 2	1/17	No class, MLK Day
	1/19	Frege: "The Thought"
Week 3	1/24	Russell: "On Denoting"
	1/26	Russell: "Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description"

II. The Semantic Content of Singular Terms

Week 4	1/31	Kripke: Selections from <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , in Martinich
	2/2	Searle: "Proper Names"
Week 5	2/7	Kaplan: "Dthat"
	2/9	Evans: "The Causal Theory of Names"
Week 6	2/14	Putnam: "The Meaning of 'Meaning' "
	2/16	Burge: "Individualism and the Mental"

III. Theories of Reference

Week 7	2/21	Strawson: "On Referring"
	2/23	Donnellan: "Reference and Definite Descriptions"
Week 8	2/28	Kripke: "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"
	3/2	von Fintel: "Would you believe it? The King of France is Back!"
Week 9	3/7	Perry: "The Problem of the Essential Indexical"
	3/9	Perry: "Indexicals and Demonstratives"

Spring Break – 3/14–3/16

IV. Propositional Attitudes

Week 10	3/21	Quine: "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes"
	3/23	Kaplan: "Quantifying In"
Week 11	3/28	Kripke: "A Puzzle about Belief"
	3/30	Salmon: "How to Become a Millian Heir"
Week 12	4/4	Saul: "Substitution and Simple Sentences"

V. Pragmatics

	4/6	Austin: "Performative Utterances"
Week 13	4/11	Grice: "Prolegomena"
	4/13	Grice: "Logic and Conversation"
Week 14	4/18	Bach: "Conversational Implicature"

VI. Truth and Meaning

	4/20	Tarski: "The Semantical Conception of Truth, and the Foundations of Semantics"
Week 15	4/25	Davidson: "Truth and Meaning"
		Soames: "Truth and Meaning in Perspective"
	4/27	Concluding Class (No reading).