

Philosophy of Language (G4481, Fall 1997)

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General Outline

This course aims to provide an introduction to some major topics and issues in contemporary philosophy of language. It is an introductory course in that it presupposes no previous acquaintance with the field. It is not, however, an elementary course, since some of the topics are difficult and the issues reach far and deep into other areas of philosophy, such as logic, the philosophy of mind, epistemology, metaphysics.

Most of the topics covered in the course center around the notion of meaning. What are the ingredients of meaning? How does the meaning of an expression contribute to the meaning of a sentence containing it? What is involved in understanding the meaning of what is said? What form should be taken by a theory of meaning for a specific language? The first part (weeks 2-6) will focus especially on the interplay between *meaning and reference*. This will take us through the work of the early authors (Mill, Frege, Russell, Carnap) up to the recent debate on the causal theory of reference (Donnellan, Kripke, Putnam). The second part (weeks 7-10) will focus on the interplay between *meaning and truth* and will cover such topics as the indeterminacy of translation, the nature of interpretation, holism, realism and antirealism. These are topics that lie at the core of the programmes of such authors as Tarski, Quine, Davidson, and Dummett. Finally, in the third part (weeks 11-13), we shall consider some aspects of the interplay between *meaning and use*, focusing on the theory of speech acts (Austin, Grice, Searle) and the nature of linguistic rules and conventions (Wittgenstein, Chomsky, Lewis).

Requirements

Two short papers (5-6 pages) and a final paper (15-20 pages). The short papers must be handed in by October 15 and November 12; the final by December 15.

Readings

Most of the required readings are available in Martinich's anthology, *The Philosophy of Language* (Third Edition, Oxford University Press, 1996). Copies of this book have been ordered at Posman Books (Broadway, between 115th and 116th). The other required readings have been collected in a packet that can be bought at the Philosophy Department.

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Schedule and Readings (M=Martinich; P=Packet)

1. Sep 3 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW
2. Sep 10 MEANING AND REFERENCE I: THE AGENDA
 - Mill: *A System of Logic*, Chapters 1 and 2 P
 - Frege: ‘On Sense and Nominatum’ M
 - Frege: ‘Letter to Jourdain’ P
 - Carnap: *Meaning and Necessity*, Chapter 1 (excerpts) P
3. Sep 17 MEANING AND REFERENCE II: DESCRIPTIONS
 - Russell: ‘On Denoting’ M
 - Russell: *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Chapter 16 M
 - Russell: ‘Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description’ P
 - Quine: ‘On What There Is’ P
 - Strawson: ‘On Referring’ M
 - Donnellan: ‘Reference and Definite Descriptions’ M
4. Sep 24 MEANING AND REFERENCE III: PROPER NAMES
 - Searle: ‘Proper Names’ M
 - Kripke: ‘Naming and Necessity’ (excerpts) M
 - Donnellan: ‘Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions’ P
 - Searle: *Intentionality*, Chapter 9 M
 - Evans: ‘The Causal Theory of Names’ M
5. Oct 1 MEANING AND REFERENCE IV: GENERAL TERMS
 - Putnam: ‘Meaning and Reference’ (or ‘The Meaning of Meaning’) M
 - Schwartz: ‘Putnam on Artifacts’ P
 - Mellor: ‘Natural Kinds’ P
 - Searle: *Intentionality*, Chapter 8 P
6. Oct 8 MEANING AND REFERENCE V: PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDES
 - Quine: ‘Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes’ M
 - Davidson: ‘On Saying That’ M
 - Barwise & Perry: ‘Semantic Innocence and Uncompromising Situations’ M
 - Kripke: ‘A Puzzle about Belief’ M

7. Oct 15 MEANING AND TRUTH I: BACKGROUND
- Russell: ‘On the Nature of Truth and Falsehood’ P
 - Austin: ‘Truth’ P
 - Tarski: ‘The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics’ M
8. Oct 22 MEANING AND TRUTH II: HOLISM
- Quine: ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’ M
 - Davidson: ‘Truth and Meaning’ M
 - Davidson: ‘Reality Without Reference’ P
 - Field: ‘Tarski’s Theory of Truth’ P
 - Strawson: ‘Meaning and Truth’ M
9. Oct 29 MEANING AND TRUTH III: INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION
- Quine: *Word and Object*, Chapter 2 P
 - Quine: *Pursuit of Truth*, Chapter 3 M
 - Davidson: ‘Radical Interpretation’ P
 - Davidson: ‘On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme’ P
 - Davidson: ‘Belief as the Basis of Meaning’ M
10. Nov 5 MEANING AND TRUTH IV: ASSERTIBILITY
- Dummett: ‘Truth’ P
 - Dummett: ‘What Is a Theory of Meaning? I’ P
 - Dummett: *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (excerpts) P
11. Nov 12 MEANING AND USE I: PRAGMATICS AND SPEECH ACTS
- Austin: ‘Performative Utterances’ M
 - Searle: ‘What Is a Speech Act?’ M
 - Grice: ‘Logic and Conversation’ M
 - Searle: ‘Indirect Speech Acts’ M
 - Stalnaker: ‘Pragmatics’ P
12. Nov 19 MEANING AND USE II: RULES AND PRIVACY
- Wittgenstein: *Philosophical Investigations* (excerpts) P
 - Kripke: *Wittgenstein: On Rules and Private Language* (excerpts) M
 - Cook: ‘Wittgenstein on Privacy’ M
13. Nov 26 MEANING AND USE III: RULES AND COMPETENCE
- Chomsky: ‘Language and the Problem of Knowledge’ M
 - Lewis: ‘Language and Languages’ M
14. Dec 3 OPEN ISSUES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS