General Outline

This seminar will survey the main philosophical theories of truth and the connections of truth and meaning, and truth and realism. Among the topics to be covered are: the correspondence theory, deflationism, Tarski’s “semantic conception of truth”, truth and meaning in Davidson and Dummett, the semantical paradoxes, the linguistic hierarchy, various solutions to the paradoxes.

Requirements and Organization

A solid background in logic and philosophy of language will be presupposed. The course will be run as a seminar, and students are encouraged to participate actively. The requirements for E-credit are a short class presentation (20-30 min) and a final paper (approximately 5,000 words). The class presentation will account for 30% of the grade; the final paper will account for the remaining 70%.

Readings

The required readings are collected in a packet that can be bought in the Office (Philosophy 708).
Tentative Schedule

1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW • Jan 21

2 – 3 THE CORRESPONDENCE THEORY • Jan 28 – Feb 4
   - Russell: ‘The Philosophy of Logical Atomism’ (1918), sections 1 and 2
   - Wittgenstein: Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus (1921), excerpts
   - Austin: ‘Truth’ (1950)
   - Barwise and Perry: ‘Semantic Innocence and Uncompromising Situations’ (1975)

4 – 5 COHERENCE AND DEFlationISM • Feb 11 – Feb 18
   - Strawson: ‘Truth’ (1950)
   - Williams: ‘Do We (Epistemologists) Need a Theory of Truth?’ (1986)
   - Horwich: Truth (1990), excerpts
   - Ramsey: ‘Facts and Propositions’ (1927)

6 – 7 THE SEMANTIC CONCEPTION • Feb 25 – Mar 4
   - Field: ‘Tarski’s Theory of Truth’ (1972)

8 – 10 TRUTH AND MEANING • Mar 11 – Apr 1 (includes Spring Break)
   - Davidson: ‘Truth and Meaning’ (1967)
   - Davidson: ‘Radical Interpretation’ (1973)
   - Dummett: The Logical Basis of Metaphysics (1991), excerpts
   - Wright: ‘Theories of Meaning and Speakers’ Knowledge’ (1987)

11 – 13 THE LIAR PARADOX • Apr 8 – Apr 22
   - Buridan: Sophismata, excerpts
   - Russell: ‘Mathematical Logic as Based on the Theory of Types’ (1908)
   - Gupta and Belnap: The Revision Theory of Truth (1993), excerpts
   - Gaifman: ‘Pointers to Truth’ (1992)

14 OPEN ISSUES AND CONCLUDING REMARKS • Apr 29