

PHIL 330

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Philosophy of Language

Spring 2015

What is language? How is communication possible? How does language relate to the world? How does it relate to the mind? Should our view of language influence our view of the world? Do speakers of different languages think and behave differently? What is the relationship between language and culture? What is meaning? Is meaning always a matter of interpretation, or do some things have meaning independently of interpretation? Is conceptual thought prior to language? Could there be facts about meaning we could only discover by looking in someone's brain? How does the proper name 'Angelina Jolie' come to designate the person it does, instead of designating someone else or no one at all? What is truth? How do metaphors work?

These are some of the core questions in the philosophy of language and the philosophy of linguistics. In this course, we will address a selection from such questions. We will also focus on pragmatics and study the role of context in determining the meaning of utterances (speech acts, implicatures, presuppositions, etc). Further, views of thinkers like Ferdinand Saussure and Noam Chomsky on the general nature of language will be discussed. In doing all of these, our main perspective will be philosophical, but we will also enter intersections with cultural science, linguistics, and psychology.

While no prior acquaintance with philosophy or any other discipline is required, regular attendance is necessary. Participants are further expected to read the assigned texts slowly and carefully as well as join the classroom discussions.

Evaluation:

In-class participation: 10 %

Midterm: 40 %

Final Exam: 50 %

Recommended textbooks and anthologies:

Lycan, W. J., *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge, 2008)

McGinn, C., *Philosophy of Language: The Classics Explained* (The MIT Press, 2015)

Kemp, G., *What is this thing called Philosophy of Language?* (Routledge, 2013)

Martinich, A. *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford University Press, 1996) [Anthology]

Course Content:

(All readings can be found in Martinich and will be made available in SUCourse)

Week 1

Introduction

Week 2

Frege, G. "On Sense and Reference"

Frege, G. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"

Week 3

Russell, B. "On Denoting"

Russell, B. "Descriptions"

Week 4

Searle, J. R. "Proper Names"

Donnellan, K. "Reference and Definite Descriptions"

Week 5

Kripke, S. A. Excerpt from "Naming and Necessity"

Putnam, H. "Meaning and Reference"

Week 6

Hempel, C. G. "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Science"

Quine, W. V. O. "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"

Week 7

Midterm

Week 8

Grice, H. P. "Meaning"

Davidson, D. "Truth and Meaning"

Lewis, D. K. "Languages and Language"

Week 9

Saussure, F. Excerpt from "Course in General Linguistics"

Chomsky, N. "Language and Problems of Knowledge"

Week 10

Austin, J. L. "Performative Utterances"

Searle, J. R. "What is a Speech Act?"

Week 11

Grice, H. P. "Logic and Conversation"

Lewis, D. K. "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"

Week 12

Kripke, S. A. "On Rules and Private Language"

Millikan, R. G. "Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox"

Week 13

Davidson, D. "What is a Metaphor?"

Walton, K. "Metaphor and Prop Oriented Make-Believe"

Week 14

Final Exam