PHI 313-800: Philosophy of Language

Spring 2018

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Office: 212 Marano Campus Center

Office Hours: Tue 3:45-4:45, Thu 12:30-1:30, by appointment. Students are also welcome to join me for lunch on Wednesdays; email me for place and time.

Course Texts: 1) Colin McGinn. *Philosophy of Language: The Classics Explained*. (MIT Press, 2015). 2) Handouts which will be made available online.

Class Meetings: Tue, Thu 9:35-10:55; Marano Campus Center, room 223

Students with disabilities: The Office of Disability Services is available to assist students who have a legally documented disability or students who suspect that they may have a disability. If you have a disabling condition that may interfere with your ability to successfully complete this course, please contact the Office of Disability Services. (Alternative testing for students with learning disabilities is available through Disability Services.)

Intellectual Integrity: Intellectual integrity on the part of all students is basic to individual growth and development through college coursework. When academic dishonesty occurs, the teaching/learning climate is seriously undermined and student growth and development are impeded. For these reasons, any form of intellectual dishonesty is a serious concern and is therefore prohibited. For more information see: www.oswego.edu/integrity. Should you commit any form of academic dishonesty, you may fail the course.

Course Requirements: 1) You must *read* all the assigned works and discuss them in class. You will be assigned to a group, each of which will be responsible for *presentations* throughout the semester (10%). 2) There will be *two exams* given during class time. They will cover the material in the assigned text (30% each) and readings. 3) You are required to *write one final paper*. The topics and terms of the paper will be given out in the final week of classes (30%).

Prerequisites: To take this course you must have successfully completed at least one philosophy course in college. Please speak with me if this is your first philosophy course.

Course Description: This course provides an introduction to some of the central ideas and texts of Twentieth Century philosophy of language as well as assorted topics relevant to the ways philosophers think about language today.

Schedule

We will proceed in the order of the chapters of the book. The pace of the course will be determined by the class. We may not cover all the material in the syllabus. We may cover more.

1. Introduction
Introduction to philosophy, contemporary analytic philosophy, and the philosophy of language.
Read: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Philosophy_of_language
What is philosophy of language? Definitions. Meaning.
Historical background: From Plato's *Sophist* (no reading).
Historical background: Locke's "Of Words" from *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (online) (pages 145-148 of this document, esp the 1st par. on p 146).
Read: Chapter 1.1 from the course text.

2. Frege
Read Frege's "On Sense and Reference" (online)
Read: Chapter 1.2 - 1.9 from the course text.
This is the founding document of contemporary philosophy of language

3. Kripke
Read: Kripke's *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 2 (online)
Read: Chapter 2 from the course text

4. Russell
Read: *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*, Chapter XVI
Read: Chapter 3 from the course text.
Russell was largely responsible for clarifying and extending Frege's project.

FIRST EXAM

5. Donnellan
Read: "Reference and definite descriptions" (online)
Read: Chapter 4 from the course text

6. Putnam
Read: "Meaning and Reference" (online)
Read: Chapter 7 from the course text

7. Grice

Read: "Meaning" (online)
Read: Chapter 10 from the course text

8. Austin
Read: selections from *How to do Things with Words* (online)

SECOND EXAM

9. Tarski and truth
Read: "Truth and Proof"
Read: Chapter 8 from the course text

10. Vagueness and Paradox
Read: Roy Sorensen's article in the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy:
https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/vagueness/#3

11. Language and Culture: The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis
Chapter 4 of John McWhorter's *The language Hoax*

12. Innateness of language
Chapter 2 of Steven Pinker's *The Language Instinct*

13. Bullshit in language
Harry Frankfurt's "On Bullshit"
Final paper topics to be distributed

14. Politics and ideology
Ch. 4 of Stanley's *How Propaganda Works*
Stanley's "Ways of Silencing"
http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/06/25/the-ways-of-silencing/

Final paper due on Thursday May 10, 10:00 AM.