

PHI 400: Philosophy of Language

Course Description

Many creatures have thoughts about the world, but as human beings we have a unique ability to express and communicate our thoughts using language. How does that work? What, after all, are thoughts, and how do the meanings of words determine which thought a given sentence expresses? And what, for that matter, are meanings? Are they in our heads, or out there in the world? In this course we will investigate these and related questions, beginning with the classic theories put forward by Frege and Russell, and continuing on to a variety of more recent views in the philosophy of language.

Contact Information

Prof. Michael Rieppel

Email: morieppe@syr.edu

OH: Thursdays 3:30–5:30, 523 Hall of Languages

Class Time & Location: M/W 3:45–5:05pm, 300 Life Sciences

Textbook

The textbook for this course will be Martinich and Sosa's anthology *The Philosophy of Language* (Oxford University Press, 2013, 6th Edition), available at the SU bookstore. Occasional supplementary readings will be posted to the course's Blackboard site.

Grades

(i) Final Exam (30%)

(ii) Midterm Exam (20%)

(iii) Two papers (15% and 25% respectively)

(iv) Attendance, participation, review questions, quizzes etc. (10%) *There will be no extra credit.*

Midterm: March 1, in class, 300 Life Sciences Building

Final Exam: May 4, 3–5pm, 300 Life Sciences Building

Reading List

I. Two Classic Theories of Language

- Frege, 'On Sense and Reference'
- Russell, 'On Denoting' and 'Descriptions'

II. Reference

- Searle 'Proper Names'
- Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*
- Evans, 'The Causal Theory of Names'
- Putnam, 'Meaning and Reference'

III. Talk about Thoughts

- Kripke, 'A Puzzle About Belief'
- Perry, 'The Problem of the Essential Indexical'
- Schiffer, 'Belief Ascription'

IV. Doing Things with Words

- Austin, 'Performative Utterances'
- Langton, 'Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts'
- Grice, 'Logic and Conversation'
- Saul, 'Substitution and Simple Sentences'
- Langton et. al., 'Language and Race'

V. Skepticism about Meaning

- Kripke, *On Rules and Private Language*
- Millikan, 'Truth, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox'

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

Syracuse University's Academic Integrity Policy holds students accountable for the integrity of the work they submit. Students should be familiar with the policy and know that it is their responsibility to learn about course specific expectations, as well as about university policy. For details visit:

<http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/full-statement-of-sus-ai-expectations/>.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services (ODS) <http://disabilityservices.syr.edu> for an appointment to discuss your needs. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. You are of course also welcome to come talk to me about your academic needs, though I can't arrange for disability-related accommodations myself.

Extensions and Absences

To request an extension on an assignment you need to contact me least *two days* before the due date. Unexcused late work will not be accepted.

If you expect to miss a class meeting due to a religious observance, please inform me of the dates on which you will be absent within the first two weeks of the semester.

Electronic Devices

Please do not use electronic devices in class. Phones, tablets, computers etc. should be put away and the volume muted. If you think you need to use an electronic device during class meetings in order to succeed in this course, please come speak to me individually.