

Philosophy 260, Philosophy of Language

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Office Hours T-Th 9:00-10:30, W 11:00-12:30 and by appointment

1. Course description: Humans have a striking tendency to express their beliefs about the world using language. Our words are about something; we use them to refer to real or imaginary objects and activities. Yet the precise nature of the correspondence between the words we use and the world in which we live remains elusive. Why is it, for example, that though we all live in the same world, our languages vary so widely? It is to this question, and those related to it, that this course will address itself. Our unifying theme will be the quest for an understanding of truth, conceived as a peculiar relation between language and reality.

2. Course texts:

A.P. Martinich, The Philosophy of Language
Michael Devitt and Kim Sterelny, Language and Reality

3. Requirements: You will be asked to submit two papers. The first, due Feb. 29, should be four to six pages in length, and will be worth 20 points. *This is an official writing-intensive course*, so a lot of emphasis will be placed on the planning, drafting, and revision of final papers. You will need to select your own topic for the final paper, to be cleared with me, along with a preliminary outline, by March 16. The final paper itself should be roughly eight to ten pages in length, and is worth 40 points. The first complete draft is due on April 18, and the final version, with all revisions, is due on May 4. No penalty-free extensions will be granted for either of the papers, except in cases of medical emergency.

In addition to the two papers, I will ask you to keep journals of your reflections on all the assigned readings. I will collect the journals five times over the course of the semester. Please write them on a computer, if possible, or on loose leaves otherwise. Journals will be judged on the degree of care they exhibit in grappling with your reading, and are worth 10 points.

Each student is also required to make an oral presentation. These may be prepared individually or with a partner; for those planning to work with partners, additional standards apply, and you should see me for clarification. Presentations should explain one or more assigned readings. They should not simply summarize readings, but rather offer critical reflection and draw connections to other readings or issues discussed in class. They are worth 15 points.

A take-home final examination will be assigned on May 4, and due in my box at 12:00 on May 11. It will be worth 10 points.

Finally, contributions to class discussion are worth up to an additional 10 points. The maximum possible score is thus 105, and you will be graded on a 100-point scale. No student who has failed to turn in all assignments, however late, by the last day of class, will receive a passing grade.

4. Schedule of readings: Readings are from the Martinich text, except where otherwise noted.

Week of:

Reading:

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| Jan. 18 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 1; §2.7. |
| Jan. 25 | Devitt and Sterelny, 2.1-2.5; Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Nominatum". |
| Feb. 1 | Devitt and Sterelny, 2.6. Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics.;" Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting" Thursday: Journals Due! |
| Feb. 8 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 3. P.F. Strawson, "On Referring". |
| Feb. 15 | Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning" |
| Feb. 24 | Donald Davidson, "Belief and the Basis of Meaning." There will be no class on Feb. 22 due to pacing break. Thursday: Journals Due! |
| Feb. 29 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 11. Tuesday, Feb. 29: First papers due! |
| Mar. 7 | W.V.O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism;" Donald Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (library reserve). |
| Mar. 14 | Keith Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"; Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 4. Thursday: Journals due! Last day for approving final paper topics and turning in outlines. |
| Mar. 21 | Spring break. |
| Mar. 28 | Ch 13. Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity;" Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference." |
| Apr. 4 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 5; Levine, "Scientific Progress and the Fregean Legacy" (library reserve). Thursday: Journals Due! |
| Apr. 11 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 7. |
| Apr. 18 | Devitt and Sterelny, Ch. 8; Jerry Fodor, excerpt from <i>The Language of Thought</i> (library reserve). Tuesday, Apr. 18: First drafts of final papers due! Thursday: no class (Easter break). |

Apr. 25

Saul Kripke, "On Rules and Private Language"
Tuesday: Journals due!

May 2

Noam Chomsky, "Language and the Problems of Knowledge." **Thursday, May 4: Final revisions of final papers due! Take-home final assigned, to be turned in to my box by noon on May 11.**

That's it! Have a great summer!