



FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
PHIL 471 L01 — Philosophy of Language
Winter Term 2011
Course Outline

Lectures: TuTh 11:00–12:15, Math Sciences 217

Instructor: Richard Zach
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Office Hours: Tu 12:30–1:30, Th 3:30–4:30 (subject to change)
or by appointment

Course Description

Philosophy of language concerns itself with the philosophical study of the nature and function of language. Some of the central questions are, e.g., how language hooks up to the world—how words can refer to things, how words and sentences get meaning. We will discuss various philosophical theories about meaning and reference in general, as well as more specific investigations of the way reference works (descriptions, demonstratives, and proper names), logical form and grammatical form, and more complex problems arising in the context of propositional attitude (e.g., belief) reports.

Prerequisites

Logic I (Phil 279) or Elementary Formal Logic (Phil 377) is a prerequisite for this course.

Required Texts

Peter Ludlow, ed., *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*. MIT Press, 1997.

The text is available in the University Bookstore in MacEwan Hall.

Requirements and Evaluation

Writing Assignments. There will be 3 short writing assignments (5% each, or 15% of the final grade; 250 words max), one mid-term paper (1,600 words max; 25%), and one final paper (2,500 words max; 35%). There will be no exams. You will be given a choice of topics for the mid-term paper. The final paper will be a project on a topic of your choice, and will require independent research. You will give a short presentation on the content of your final paper in the last week of class, the presentation will count %5 towards your final grade. You may collaborate with one other student on the final project.

Note that the short writing assignments are generally due *before* the corresponding readings are discussed in class. While the aim of the papers is to develop your skills in exposition and argumentation, the short assignments are intended in part to train your *reading comprehension* skills. The questions you will answer in these assignments will be specific questions on the texts. All you need to do to answer them is read—and understand—the text. They shouldn't require the historical or philosophical background you'll get from the subsequent lecture.

All assignments should be typed/printed, double-spaced, on white (recycled is ok) letter-size paper with 3 cm margins all around, preferably in 12 point Times or a similar serif font.

Participation. Class participation counts for 20% of your final grade. Your participation will be assessed on the basis of your contribution to discussion in class and on the course website. (If you are shy and don't want to speak in class, 5 posts with substantive philosophical content in the online discussion forum will earn you an A for this part of the final grade.) However, if all of your posts occur within one 7-day period, at most 3 of them will be counted toward your participation mark. Only posts before the due date of the final paper count.

Evaluation and Grades. On each assignment you will receive a letter grade reflecting the level of comprehension of the readings and your ability to assess philosophical arguments shown by the work you submit. There will be no +/- grades, but “slash” grades (e.g., A/B) are possible. The meanings of letter grades are defined in the *Calendar*; for written work, they amount roughly to the following criteria:

- A** Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter. (Your writing is clear and concise; your assignments make obvious that your understanding of the issues and arguments is correct and complete; you show superior ability in representing and assessing others' philosophical arguments; you show ability for original philosophical thinking).
- B** Good—clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete. (You show a good grasp of the assigned reading; but either your writing is not perfectly clear or your assignments are largely only expository and don't show the critical ability required for an A).
- C** Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter. (Your work shows that you've worked through the reading and attended class, but your assignments misrepresent the arguments we're discussing, or your criticisms are off the mark.)

D Minimal pass—marginal performance. (Your work is unclear or confused; or you grossly misrepresent the arguments we’re discussing.)

F Fail—Unsatisfactory performance. (Your work fails to show that you’ve made a serious attempt at coming to grips with the material; or your writing borders on the incomprehensible.)

Note the emphasis in the above on the fact that it is not enough that you understand the issues we discuss, your written work must *show this*. Thus, the quality of your writing will be a major factor in which grade you’ll get. If your sentences miss subjects or verbs, your cross-references are unclear, or you use terminology ambiguously, you will receive a lower mark than if you had composed and proof-read your paper more carefully.

In computing your final grade, your marks will be converted to grade points and averaged according to the weights given above. The correspondence of letter grades with grade points is defined in the *Calendar* (A = 4, B = 3, C = 2, D = 1, F = 0). “Slash” grades receive 0.5 below the value of the higher grade (e.g., A/B = 3.5).

The final grade will be the letter grade corresponding to the weighted average of your assignments, papers, and participation plus a margin of 0.2. For the final grade, +’s and –’s are possible, too; as defined in the *Calendar*, +/- adds/subtracts 0.3 grade points. In other words, a course average of 3.8 or higher receives an A; at least 3.5 and less than 3.8, an A–; at least 3.1 and less than 3.5, a B+; at least 2.8 and less than 3.1, a B; and so on. (This means that for two A’s and an A/B you still get an A overall; for two A’s and a B, an A–.) There is no D– grade; to earn a D you require a course average of at least 0.8. The A+ grade is reserved for truly outstanding performance.

Assignments and Policies

Late work and extensions. Assignments handed in late will be penalized by the equivalent of one grade point per calendar day, unless you can document a medical or other valid reason for why your assignment is late. If you turn an assignment in late, you must give it to the instructor in person or put it in the department dropbox (it will then be date-stamped by department staff). Note that the dropboxes are cleared at 4 pm, the department closes at 4:30 pm on weekdays and *is closed Saturdays and Sundays*.

Plagiarism. You will find the University policy on plagiarism at the end of the printed version of this outline. Plagiarism is a very serious academic offense. It is *not limited* to copying papers wholesale from the Internet; copying and close paraphrase of the texts, of the lectures, or of anyone (other than you) without clear attribution constitutes plagiarism. Your assignments should only contain your own formulations. You should use direct quotes from the texts sparingly, and clearly mark them as such by using quotation marks and giving a source reference. When in doubt, consult with the instructor. **Plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the assignment or in the course and a report to the Dean’s office.**

Checking your grades and reappraisals of work. University policies for reappraisal of term work and final grades apply (see the *Calendar* section “Reappraisal of Grades and Academic Appeals”). In particular, term work will only be reappraised within 15 days of the date you are advised of

your marks. Please keep track of your assignments (make sure to pick them up in lecture or in office hours) and your marks (check them on the website) and compare them with the graded work returned to you.

Course Website

A course website on U of C's BlackBoard server has been set up. You will be automatically registered if you're registered in the class. To access the BlackBoard site, you can either go directly to blackboard.ucalgary.ca and log in with your UCIT account name and password, or you can access it through the myUofC portal (my.ucalgary.ca; log in with your eID).

Tentative Syllabus

This is a tentative syllabus to give you a rough idea what topics we will cover when. Due dates and reading assignments are subject to change. Lxx indicates the chapter number of the text in the Ludlow anthology.

PART I. Meaning

Week 1 (Jan 11, 13).

Readings: Frege, "The Thought" (L1)

Week 2 (Jan 18).

Readings: Quine, "Translation and meaning" (L3)

No class Jan 20.

Week 3 (Jan 25, 27).

Readings: Grice, "Utterer's meaning and intentions" (L4); Tarski, "The semantic conception of truth" (electronic)

Short paper #1 due Jan 27.

Week 4 (Feb 1, 3) *Readings:*

Davidson, "Truth and meaning" (L5), Dummett, "What is a theory of meaning" (L7)

Part II. Logical form

Week 5 (Feb 8, 10)

Readings: Davidson, "The logical form of action sentences" (L11), Evans, "Semantic structure and logical form" (L12), Harman, "Deep structure as logical form" (L12)

Short paper #2 due Feb 10

PART III. Descriptions

Week 6 (Jan 15, 17).

Readings: Russell, "Descriptions" (L15), Strawson, "On referring" (L16)

Week 7 (Mar 1, 3)

Donnellan, “Reference and definite descriptions” (L17), Kripke, “Speaker’s reference and semantic reference” (L18).

PART IV. Proper Names

Week 8 (Mar 8, 10).

Readings: Frege, “Sense and reference” (L22), Searle, “Proper names” (L23)

Midterm paper due Mar 10.

Week 9 (Mar 15, 17)

Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (L25), Evans, “The causal theory of names” (L26)

PART V. Demonstratives

Week 10 (Mar 22, 24).

Readings: Wettstein, “Truth and demonstratives” (L27), Kaplan, “Dthat” (L28)

Short paper #3 due Mar 31

PART VI. Attitude Reports

Week 11 (Mar 29, 31)

Readings: Quine, “The vagaries of reference” (L34); Davidson, “On saying that” (L35)

Week 12 (Apr 5, 7)

Readings: Partee, “Opacity and scope” (L36); Kripke, “A puzzle about belief” (L38)

Week 13: Review, Presentations (Apr 12, 14).

Final paper due Friday, April 15.

INTELLECTUAL HONESTY

Intellectual honesty is the cornerstone of the development and acquisition of knowledge and requires that the contribution of others be acknowledged. As a result, cheating or plagiarism on any assignment or examination is regarded as **an extremely serious academic offence**, the penalty for which may be an F on the assignment and possibly also an F in the course, academic probation, or requirement to withdraw. The University Calendar states that plagiarism exists when:

- the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test);
- parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author;
- the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source; and/or
- a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Plagiarism occurs not only when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, but also when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. A bibliography is insufficient to establish which portions of the student's work are taken from external sources; footnotes or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATION

It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodation. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 403-220-8237. Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

STUDENTS' UNION REPRESENTATIVES

The Humanities Representatives are Laura Golebiowski (arts1@su.ucalgary.ca), Bhuvana Sankaranarayanan (arts2@su.ucalgary.ca), Lara Schmitz (arts3@su.ucalgary.ca), and Vincent St. Pierre (arts4@su.ucalgary.ca).

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND PROTECTION OF PRIVACY (FOIP) ACT

The University of Calgary is under the jurisdiction of the provincial FOIP Act in all aspects of its operations as a publicly funded institution. The Department of Philosophy ensures the student's right to privacy by requiring all graded assignments, papers, and exams be returned to the student directly from the instructor unless other arrangements have been made in writing and approved by the Department Administrator.

SAFEWALK: PROMOTING CAMPUS SAFETY AND AWARENESS

Twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, Safewalk volunteers walk people safely to their destination on campus. This service is free and available to students, staff, and campus visitors. Safewalks are done in male/female pairs. The volunteers walk anywhere on campus (including McMahon Stadium, Health Sciences, Student Family Housing, the Alberta Children's Hospital and the University LRT station). To request a Safewalk volunteer to walk with you, call 403-220-5333 (24 hours a day/seven days a week/365 days a year) or use one of the Help Phones located across campus (they are not just for emergencies).