

Philosophy 408: The Language Revolution
Spring 2009
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30pm - 3:45pm
Cooper 207

Hamilton College
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Syllabus

Course Description and Overview:

If there is one unifying theme for twentieth-century philosophy, it would have to be the study of language. Some philosophers believed that all philosophical questions arise from misuses of language. Others believed that clarifying our uses of language can lead us to solutions to perennial philosophical questions, like the mind and body problem, or whether God exists. Still others explored the nature of language and its uses for its own sake. The profound developments in logic in the twentieth century were concomitant with this focus on language.

Texts:

A.P. Martinich, *The Philosophy of Language* 5th ed., Oxford University Press, 2008.
Additional readings, available on reserve, and on the course website.

On-Line Resources:

The website for this course is:

http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Language/Course_Home.htm

Limited material will be available on the Blackboard course pages. The Blackboard page will include a link to the course website. The course website includes an html syllabus, course schedule, class notes, assignments, other readings and handouts, and links to websites specifically selected for this course.

Assignments and Grading

Each student will be expected to complete three seminar papers during the term. A sign-up sheet for the first two seminar papers will be distributed in our second class meeting. Students will also be expected to complete a longer paper, in two drafts (preliminary and final). There will be a final exam. Assignments will be weighted as follows:

1. All the primary readings listed below, including seminar papers.
2. Article précis (10%)
3. Two seminar papers/presentations (2-4 pages; 5-10 minutes) (30%; 15% each)
4. Term paper (8-12 pages) (30%)
5. Final exam (30%)

Article précis are 100- to 150- word summaries of an assigned reading. At most one précis is due in each class. I will not collect them until the end of the term, unless you display a need for me to collect them earlier. You will mainly be graded on the completion of twenty précis, rather than their quality. I expect that the précis will be useful to you in preparing both for classes and for the final exam. You need not complete a précis for classes in which you are presenting a seminar paper.

Classes will generally run as discussions of a 750- to 1500-word seminar paper. Seminar papers

should assimilate the assigned readings and summarize the main arguments. Critical discussion is encouraged, and need not be fully developed. You are instigating class discussion, focusing our thoughts on the central theses, and raising questions. It is good practice to end a seminar paper with a few questions you believe will be useful for the class to discuss.

Each seminar paper is due at noon by email to all seminar participants the day before the class in which it will be discussed (i.e. Monday or Wednesday). This deadline is necessary for all participants in the seminar to be able to read the paper and prepare comments and questions for class. Classes will begin with a short (five-to-ten minute) presentation of the main ideas of your paper, at which time you may discuss any particular difficulties in the material, or topics that you were unable to cover in the paper. Your grade for the term paper will depend on both the paper and your presentation of it.

Your term papers will be completed in three stages. A one-paragraph abstract of your paper is due on Tuesday, March 31. A full draft of your term paper is due on Tuesday, April 14. The final draft is due on Thursday, April 30. I expect that most of you will choose to expand one of your first two seminar papers, considering an assigned article and a response to it that we did not discuss in class. I will be happy to meet with you to discuss topics, in advance. Failure to hand in a draft, or handing in an insufficient draft, will reduce your final paper grade by two steps (e.g. from B+ to B-).

The final exam will be on Wednesday, May 13, 2009, from 2pm to 5pm. Preparatory questions will be posted on the course website.

Both the Writing Center and the Oral Communications Center have an astoundingly wonderful set of resources to help you write and speak more effectively.

The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.

Topics and Readings:

Page numbers below refer to the Martinich volume.

'OL' indicates that the reading is available on line, either on ereserve or on the course website.

Full bibliographical references for readings not in the Martinich are available in the Course Bibliography.

I. Motivating the Revolution

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 6, OL

Martinich, "Introduction," pp 1-28

Selections on language from Plato, Hume, Berkeley, and Wittgenstein, OL

Selections on the ontological argument from Anselm, Gaunilo, Descartes, Caterus, Hume and Kant, OL

Gottlob Frege, from *Begriffsschrift*, OL

John Stuart Mill, "Of Names," pp 284-9

John Locke, "Of Words," pp 621-5

II. The Shot (Not Immediately) Heard 'Round the World

Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," 36-49

Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Nominatum," pp 217-229

III. Reference

Bertrand Russell, "Descriptions," pp 239-45

P.F. Strawson, "On Referring," pp 246-60

Keith Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions," pp 265-77

Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," 290-305
Hilary Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," pp 306-13

IV. Meaning

Ayer, "The Principle of Verification," OL
Carl G. Hempel, "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes (1950)," pp 50-62
W.V. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," pp 63-76
W.V. Quine, "Ontological Relativity," OL
H.P. Grice, "Meaning," pp 108-113
Stephen Schiffer, "Overview of *Remnants of Meaning*," OL
Mark Johnston, "The End of the Theory of Meaning," OL
Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics," pp 85-107
Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning," pp 114-125
Jerrold Katz, "Introduction" and "Sense," OL

V. On Private Language

Wittgenstein, "On Private Language," OL
Saul Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages," pp 626-38
Ruth Millikan, "Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox," pp 639-55

VI. Ontology of Language

Noam Chomsky, "Language and Problems of Knowledge," pp 675-693
Jerrold Katz, "The Unfinished Chomskyan Revolution," OL
Michael Devitt, "Linguistics is Not Psychology," OL

Schedule

'P' preceding an article name indicates that a précis will be due for the given reading.

Class 1: Motivating the Revolution (1/20)

Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*, Chapter 6
Martinich, pp 1-28
Selections from Plato, Hume, Berkeley, and Wittgenstein

Class 2: The Ontological Argument: A Case Study (1/22)

Selections from Anselm, Gaunilo, Descartes, Caterus, Hume, and Kant
Frege, from *Begriffsschrift*

Class 3: Locke and Mill on Language (1/27)

P: Locke, "Of Words," pp 621-5
Mill, "Of Names," pp 284-9

Class 4: Intensionalism (1/29)

P: Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry," 36-49

Class 5: The Sense/Reference Distinction (2/3)

P: Frege, "On Sense and Nominatum," pp 217-229

Class 6: Russell's Description Theory (2/5)

P: Russell, "Descriptions," pp 239-45

Class 7: Strawson on Referring (2/10)

P: Strawson, "On Referring," pp 246-60

Class 8: The Attributive/Referential Distinction (2/12)

P: Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions," pp 265-77

Class 9: Direct Reference, I (2/17)

P: Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," pp 290-305

Class 10: Direct Reference, II (2/19)

P: Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," pp 290-305

Class 11: Natural Kinds (2/21)

P: Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," pp 306-13

Class 12: Positivism (2/26)

P: Ayer, "The Principle of Verification"

Hempel, "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes (1950)," pp 50-62

Class 13: Meaning Holism I (3/3)

P: Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," pp 63-76

Class 14: Meaning Holism II (3/5)

P: Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," pp 63-76

Class 15: Meaning Holism III (3/10)

P: Quine, "Ontological Relativity"

Class 16: Intention-Based Semantics (3/12)

P: Grice, "Meaning," pp 108-113

Class 17: Deflationism (3/31)

Abstracts of term papers are due.

Schiffer, "Overview of Remnants of Meaning"

P: Johnston, "The End of the Theory of Meaning"

Class 18: Tarski's Theory of Truth (4/2)

P: Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics," pp 85-107

- Class 19: Truth Theories as Meaning Theories (4/7)
P: Davidson, "Truth and Meaning," 114-125
- Class 20: The New Intensionalism (4/9)
P: Katz, "Introduction" and "Sense"
- Class 21: The Private Language Argument (4/14)
Full drafts of term papers are due.
P: Wittgenstein, "On Private Language"
- Class 22: Meaning Skepticism I (4/16)
P: Wittgenstein, "On Private Language"
Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages," pp 626-38
- Class 23: Meaning Skepticism II (4/21)
P: Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages," pp 626-38
- Class 24: A Solution to the Kripkenstein Paradox (4/23)
P: Millikan, "Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox," pp 639-55
- Class 25: Chomsky I (4/28)
P: Chomsky, "Language and Problems of Knowledge," pp 675-693
- Class 26: Chomsky II (4/30)
Final versions of term papers are due.
Chomsky, "Language and Problems of Knowledge," pp 675-693
- Class 27: Platonism (5/5)
P: Katz, "The Unfinished Chomskyan Revolution"
- Class 28: Devitt (5/7)
P: Devitt, "Linguistics is Not Psychology"

Dates to Remember:

- March 31: Abstracts for term papers are due
April 14: Drafts of term papers are due
April 30: Final versions of term papers are due
May 7: Twenty précisés are due
May 13: Final exam