

Presentation Assignment

During this semester, you will participate in one presentation to the class. Presentations will mainly be done in pairs, though there are some opportunities for solo presentations.

Your presentation should demonstrate your attempts to grapple with some portion of the reading for class. You should summarize central theses, focus on arguments, and raise questions for discussion. In contrast to a standard, rhetorical philosophy paper, your presentation may be mainly exegetical. Connect the various assertions in your presentation; avoid mere lists. I welcome some critical examination of the readings, though the criticism need not be fully developed.

Here are some general questions you might try to answer in your presentation.

What is the big picture? Is the central topic about meaning, or reference, or ontology, or something else? What questions is the author attempting to answer?

What is the relation between the analysis in the reading and actual linguistic practice?

How does this philosopher's approach to a particular question differ from others we have already seen?

What would this philosopher's theory of meaning/theory of reference look like?

Is the argument in the article convincing?

With what premises would philosophers whose work we have already studied agree or disagree?

What arguments or phenomena is the author missing?

Is the central claim you are examining true?

Shared presentations should show significant evidence of shared work and understanding. To assist me with the assignment of a grade, after the presentation, each presenter should send me a confidential email containing brief details concerning how the preparatory work was distributed. I understand that the person who speaks the most during the presentation may not be the person most responsible for the work. I hope that your work, and your grades, will ordinarily be distributed equally.

Your presentation may be as ambitious as you wish. You might generate discussion by presenting a controversial position. You might ask interesting questions. You may be creative about how to interact with the class. You may do a PowerPoint presentation. You may do something more inventive, like have us break into groups to prepare a debate.

You should prepare a ten-to-fifteen minute presentation. Given discussion, your time leading the class may vary from half a class period to a full class period.

I welcome, indeed encourage, you to use your presentation topic as the theme for either your first or second paper.

Resources

Please feel free to meet with me before your presentations. I will try to have notes for each class available in time for you to use them in your preparation.

Many students find the Oral Communications Center, located in KJ 222, helpful. They have a wealth of resources readily available, and are eager to help. The staff at the lab can assist you both with the content of your presentation, and with determining how best to present your material. When you have prepared a draft of your presentation, they can record you while you practice giving the presentation. You can watch the recording with a tutor, or by yourself. You can sign up for an appointment with a tutor on the door of the lab, or you can email them at: oralcomm@hamilton.edu. [Their website](#) offers valuable resources.

Sign-ups

We will sign up for presentations by email after the second day of class, Tuesday, September 2. The following dates and articles are available presentation topics.

- September 11: Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"
- September 16: Frege, "On Sense and Reference"
- September 18: Russell, "Descriptions"
- September 23: Strawson, "On Referring"
- September 25: Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"
- September 30: Kripke, "Naming and Necessity"
- October 7: Putnam, "Meaning and Reference"
- October 21: Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"
- October 23: Quine, "Ontological Relativity"
- October 30: Wittgenstein, "On Private Language"
- November 4: Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages"
- November 11: Grice, "Meaning"
- November 13: Schiffer, from *Meaning*
- November 18: Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics"
- November 20: Davidson, "Truth and Meaning"
- December 2: Austin, "Performative Utterances"
- December 4: Grice, "Logic and Conversation"