

Philosophy 308: The Language Revolution  
Fall 2014  
Tuesdays, Thursdays, 1pm - 2:15pm

Hamilton College  
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## Syllabus

### Course Description and Overview

If there is one unifying theme for twentieth-century philosophy, it is 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-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.

We will start by looking briefly at some pre-twentieth-century views of language and Frege's seminal work on language in the late nineteenth century, especially his distinction between sense and reference. The second part of the course, roughly the first half of the term, will focus on the nature of reference: How do words hook on to the world? The third part of the course, roughly the second half of the term, will focus on the nature of meaning: How does language get its content? For the final two weeks of the term, we will look at aspects of language which are generally called pragmatics and which concern how language connects with action. As a case study, we will read two recent papers on the semantics of stereotypes and slurs.

Along the way, we will read some of the most important philosophers of the twentieth century, including Russell, Wittgenstein, Tarski, Hempel, Strawson, Grice, Quine, Putnam, and Kripke.

### Texts

Required readings are listed below and available on the course website, as will be my class notes. There are many good secondary sources in philosophy of language. See the course bibliography, available on the website.

### On-Line Resources

The website for this course is:

[http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course\\_Websites/Language\\_F14/Course\\_Home.html](http://www.thatmarcusfamily.org/philosophy/Course_Websites/Language_F14/Course_Home.html)

The course website includes the syllabus and schedule, readings, class notes, handouts, and links to websites specifically selected for this course. I will use the Blackboard site *only* to post grades.

### Office Hours

My office hours for the Fall 2014, term are 11am - noon, Monday through Friday. My office is 202 College Hill Road, Room 210.

## Assignments and Grading

Your responsibilities this course include the following, with their contributions to your grade calculation in parentheses:

Attendance and participation  
Readings  
Group Text Annotations (10%)  
In-Class Presentation (20%)  
Two papers (45%; 20% for the first and 25% for the second)  
Final Exam (25%)

**Attendance and Readings:** While there is no direct reward or penalty for attendance, I expect students to come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading.

**Group Text Annotations:** For selected readings, indicated by asterisks in the schedule below, I will provide excerpts as shared documents in Google Drive. Each student should make at least two comments on each shared document before the class in which the reading is to be discussed. Your comments may be directed at either the reading itself or other, prior comments. Some of the selections are much longer than the excerpts I will provide; you are responsible for the entire reading.

**Presentation:** Each student is required to participate in one in-class presentation. Presentations may be done individually or in pairs. 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 will distribute more specific guidelines, as well as a sign-up sheet, in class. I welcome, indeed encourage, you to use your presentation topic as the theme for either your first or second paper.

**Papers:** Each student will write two short papers. The first paper, 4-6 pages on any theme from Part II of the course (Reference) is due on Thursday, October 9. The second paper, 5-8 pages on any topic in the material from Part III of the course (Meaning) is due on Tuesday, December 9. I will distribute more details about each paper in class.

**Final Exam:** The final exam will be given on Tuesday, December 16, 9am - Noon. Preparatory questions will be posted on the website.

**On Grades:** Grades on assignments will be posted on Blackboard, along with a running total, which I call your grade calculation. Your grade calculation is a guide for me to use in assigning you a final grade. There are no rules binding how I translate your grade calculation, which will appear in Blackboard as a percentage, into a letter grade. In particular, the Hamilton College key for translating your letter grades into percentages, used for graduate school admissions, is not a tool for calculating your final grade. I welcome further discussion of the purposes and methods of grading, as well as my own grading policies.

Both the [Writing Center](#) and the [Oral Communications Center](#) have astoundingly wonderful sets of resources to help you write and speak more effectively.

**The Hamilton College Honor Code will be enforced.**

## Topics and Readings

Note: Readings marked with asterisks contain excerpts for group annotation. You are responsible for the entire reading.

### Part I: Before the Revolution

Class	Date	Topic	Readings for Class
1	August 28	Introduction: Plato and the Moderns	Lewis Carroll, <i>Through the Looking Glass</i> , Chapter 6 Selections from Plato's "Sophist", Hume's <i>Inquiry</i> , Berkeley's <i>Principles</i> , and Locke's <i>Essay</i> Swift, "Getting Rid of Words"
2	September 2	Contrasting Non-Linguistic and Linguistic Responses to the Ontological Argument	Selections from Anselm, Gaunilo, Descartes, Caterus, Hume and Kant
3	September 4	Introduction: Two Nineteenth-Century Views	*Meinong, "The Theory of Objects," §1-§6 Mill, "Of Names"

### Part II: Reference

Class	Date	Topic	Readings for Class
4	September 9	Frege's Projects	Martinich, Introduction to <i>The Philosophy of Language</i> *Frege, from Preface to <i>Begriffsschrift</i> Frege, from Preface to <i>Grundlagen</i>
5	September 11	Fregean Intensionalism	Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"
6	September 16	The Sense/Reference Distinction	*Frege, "On Sense and Reference"
7	September 18	The Description Theory	*Russell, "Descriptions"
8	September 23	Presupposition	*Strawson, "On Referring"
9	September 25	The Attributive/Referential Distinction	*Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"
10	September 30	Direct Reference I	*Wittgenstein, "On 'Moses'" Kripke, from <i>Naming and Necessity</i>
11	October 2	Direct Reference II	*Kripke, from <i>Naming and Necessity</i>
12	October 7	Natural Kinds	*Putnam, "Meaning and Reference"

Part III: Meaning

Class	Date	Topic	Readings for Class
13	October 9 <b>Paper #1 due</b>	Logical Empiricism	Wittgenstein, from <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> Ayer, "The Principle of Verification"
14	October 14	The Verification Theory	Hempel, "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes"
15	October 21	Meaning Holism I	*Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"
16	October 23	Meaning Holism II	*Quine, "Ontological Relativity"
17	October 28	Meaning Holism III	*Quine, "Ontological Relativity"
18	October 30	Meanings Skepticism I	*Wittgenstein, "Meaning as Use" Wittgenstein, "On Private Language"
19	November 4	Meanings Skepticism II	Wittgenstein, from <i>Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics</i> *Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages"
20	November 6	Meanings Skepticism III	Kripke, "On Rules and Private Languages"
21	November 11	Intention-Based Semantics I	*Grice, "Meaning"
22	November 13	Intention-Based Semantics II	*Schiffer, "Toward an Account of S-Meaning"
23	November 18	Tarski's Theory of Truth	*Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics"
24	November 20	Truth Theories as Meaning Theories	*Davidson, "Truth and Meaning"

Part IV: Pragmatics

Class	Date	Topic	Readings for Class
25	December 2	Speech Acts	*Austin, "Performative Utterances"
26	December 4 <b>Paper #2 due</b>	Conversational Implicature	Grice, "Logic and Conversation"
27	December 9	Stereotype Semantics of Slurs	*Jeshion, "Slurs and Stereotypes"
28	December 11	Perspectivalism	*Camp, "Slurring Perspectives"

Final exam: Tuesday, December 16, 9am - Noon