Philosophy 23: Meaning and Communication

Summer 2017, C Session
Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, 1:00p.m.-2:20p.m.
Bunche 3170

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Office Hours (tentative): M 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Course Overview

We humans use language to express our thoughts, conduct inquiry, and refer to things in the world. We also use language, given a social background, to communicate and coordinate, to act together, and to manipulate, deceive, and subordinate. This class will examine the nature and roles of language for human beings, focusing especially on the connections between language and thought and language and action, including linguistic manifestations of and effects on social structure. We will investigate the nature of reference and the nature of communication, as well as the relations between language and theory, meaning and intention, communication and ethics, vagueness and context, and, finally, speech and oppression, specifically examining pornography and slur terms. Readings will be drawn mostly from 20th Century philosophy, including feminist philosophy, the theory of reference, and speech act theory, and will touch on issues in the philosophy of science, metaphysics, and ethics.
Course Materials


*Any edition of the Martinich anthology is acceptable, as long as it has the readings marked below with an asterisk.


All other readings will be made available on the CCLE website.

Difficulty

This course has no prerequisites and assumes no prior background in philosophy. It is, in that way, introductory. It does require sustained engagement with the ideas and arguments of the course, careful and critical reading of challenging texts, and the development and exercise of the skills of philosophical writing.

In short, to excel in this course, you should expect to:

- Do all assigned readings *and engage* (take notes, evaluate, etc.)
- Attend lecture *and engage* (take notes, ask questions, etc.)
- Complete all of the online reading responses (see below)
- Work hard on papers (and submit them on time)

The course will be a focused survey of particularly significant debates in philosophy of language. I will not assume any prior familiarity with logic or philosophy of language. The readings and issues will nevertheless be challenging, and we will move through a variety of particular topics relatively quickly. This means you are less likely to be bored for long by any given topic. It also means that you will have to keep up with the readings and remain diligent about engaging with and keeping track of the course material as we proceed.

Course Requirements

1. Submitted questions, to be completed by 8pm on Thursdays.
2. Two writing assignments (3-4 pages, 4-6 pages).
The final grade for the course will be determined as follows:

- **Participation**: 10%
- **Reading questions**: 15%
- **Short paper**: 30%
- **Final Paper**: 45%

- Students needing an academic accommodation because of a disability should notify the UCLA Center for Accessible Education within the first two weeks of quarter.
  - The CAE is at A255 Murphy Hall; its phone number is (310) 825-1501.

- Late assignments will be docked by **one-third of a letter grade**, and docked an additional third of a letter grade every twenty-four hours after the due date.
- No extensions will be granted within 24 hours of a deadline or after the deadline has passed.

**Reading Questions**

On Thursdays, students will submit one *brief* reading summary (one or two paragraphs), on any one of the week’s readings, and one or two good questions about any of the week’s readings through the CCLE website. 1/3 of the grade will be determined by completion. 1/3 will be determined by the quality of the summary. 1/3 will be determined by the quality of the questions. This is designed to be straightforward if you have done at least one of the readings.

**Papers**

**SHORT PAPER** (3-4 pages)
Due Wednesday August 29th at 12:01 a.m. to Turnitin.

**FINAL PAPER** (4-6 pages)
Due Saturday September 16th at 12:01 a.m. to Turnitin.

**Academic Integrity**

Be familiar with and abide by UCLA’s policies regarding academic and intellectual integrity: [http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity](http://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity)

In accordance with these policies, any suspected plagiarism will be forwarded to the Dean of Students. Do not plagiarize. Cite all of your sources.
Course Schedule  (subject to change)

Note: This is a 5-unit summer course, and the readings have been selected with that in mind. I will let you know as we proceed which readings, and which parts of those readings, to prioritize. I have selected readings that are for the most part not overly technical and for the most part can be approached in isolation, i.e., without requiring full competence with any previous particular reading. The paper topics will mostly focus on particular readings or particular debates.

UNIT 1: COGNITION AND REFERENCE

Week 1: Introduction, Sense and Reference

Read: “Of Words” (1699), John Locke*
Read: “On Sense and Reference” (1892), Gottlob Frege*
Read: “The Thought” (1918), Gottlob Frege*

Week 2: Logical Form, Direct Reference, Implicature

Read: “On Denoting” (1905) by Bertrand Russell*
Read: “Reference and Definite Descriptions” (1966) by Keith Donnellan*
Read: Excerpt, Naming and Necessity (1980) by Saul Kripke*

UNIT 2: MEANING AND INDETERMINACY

Week 3: Externalism, Intention, Community

Read: “Meaning and Reference” (1973), Hilary Putnam*
Optional: Excerpt from Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language (1982), Saul Kripke*
Read: “Meaning and Communication” (1971), D.M. Armstrong
Read: “Languages and Language” (1975), David Lewis

Week 4: Vagueness, Indeterminacy, Linguistic Behavior

Read: “Meaning and Translation” from Word and Object (1960), W. V. O. Quine
Highly Optional: Precis of Vagueness (1997), Timothy Williamson
Optional: “The Epistemic Theory of Vagueness” (1999), Stephen Schiffer

**ASSIGNMENT 1 DUE Aug 29th AT 12:01 a.m. TO TURNITIN**
UNIT 3: LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Week 5: Speech Acts, Feminist Philosophy of Language, Subordination

Read: “Logic and Conversation” (1975), H.P. Grice*
Read: “Performatie Utterances” (1961), J.L. Austin
Read: “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts” (1993), Rae Langton

Week 6: Expresivism, Slurs

Read: “How to be an Ethical Anti-Realist” (1993), Simon Blackburn
Read: “Expressivism and the Offensiveness of Slurs” (2013), Robin Jeshion
Read: “Language and Race” (2012), Luvell Anderson, Sally Haslanger, and Rae Langton

**PAPER 2 DUE Sept 16th AT 12:01 a.m. TO TURNITIN**