

Philosophy 250-01
Topics: Philosophy of Language
Fall 2005

MWF 3:00pm—3:50pm, Buckman 330
Professor: Brendan O’Sullivan
Office: Clough 402
Office hours: M 4:00pm—5:30pm,
Th 3:30pm—5:00pm and by appointment
Phone: 843-3096
Email: osullivanb@rhodes.edu

Description

This course aims to provide an introduction to some of the central issues in the philosophy of language. We will focus on two key concepts, meaning and reference. Among the questions that we shall address are the following:

1. How do words attach to the world? ‘Tree’ is about trees, and not about grass. What makes that true?
 - a. Is it something about us, about our intentions, or is it something about the world?
2. What kind of constraints are there on interpreting meaningful texts?
 - a. Are all interpretations equally defensible? Or are there standards of interpretation? If so, what are they?
3. What is meaning? What is a word’s meaning? Is meaning ultimately a bankrupt concept that should be expelled from philosophy?
4. How does our conception of meaning affect our theory of knowledge?
5. How does our conception of meaning affect our theory of mind?
6. What is the nature of metaphor?

Required Texts

Martinich, A.P., ed. *Philosophy of Language*. 4th edition.
Lakoff, George and Mark Johnson. *Metaphors We Live By*.
Readings on reserve in Barret Library.

Course Requirements

Your course grade will be determined according to the following elements and percentages. Due dates are subject to change.

Paper#1	20%	September 30
Paper#2	20%	October 31
Paper#3	35%	December 7
Oral Presentation	10%	to be chosen
Participation & Preparation	15%	continual

Two weeks before papers are due, I'll will distribute topics. You may write on a topic of your own, but all topics must be cleared by me before the deadline.

See the accompanying guidelines for Reading, Oral Presentations, and Participation and Preparation.

Attendance

Attendance is required. I will allow 5 absences, whether excused or unexcused. Beyond that, your course grade will be penalized by excessive absences. In extreme cases, an F for the course may be assigned.

Late work policy

I am extremely reluctant to grant extensions on written work, and typically will do so only given circumstances so serious that they require the attention of the Dean of Students (e.g. medical or family emergency). For unauthorized late work, I will deduct 1/3 of a letter grade each day (e.g., A- to a B+, or a B+ to a B). Each calendar day counts. Note: you can always submit your paper via e-mail.

Class Conduct

Please treat each other with courtesy and respect. Listen when your classmates offer their insights. Offer your own criticisms constructively.

I expect students to arrive to class on time. Do not make a habit of entering the class 5 min. late. It is distracting to the other students and to me and undermines the course's goals.

The Honor Code

You are expected to observe the Honor Code at all times. All work on graded material should be your own. I encourage you, however, to study together, and in general to discuss the course outside of class (with each other and with me). We'll talk about Honor Code restrictions on specific assignments later in the semester.

Reading List

I. Introductory Material

1. Blackburn, Ch. 1, *Spreading the Word* [R]
2. Martinich, "Introduction," pp. 1-15, 18-19, 22-23

II. Ideas, Intentions, Conventions & Meaning

3. Locke, "Of Words"
4. Wittgenstein, excerpt from *The Blue and Brown Books* [R]
5. Stroud, "The Background of Thought" [R]
6. Grice, "Meaning"
7. Blackburn, selection from Ch. 4, *Spreading the Word* [R]
8. Strawson, "Meaning and Truth"
9. Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context" [R]
10. Searle, "Reiterating the Difference" [R]

III. Verificationism

11. Hempel, "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance"
12. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"
13. Grice and Strawson, "In Defense of a Dogma" [R]

IV. Speech Acts

14. Austin, "Performative Utterances"
15. Searle, "The Structure of Illocutionary Acts"
16. Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts"
17. Grice, "Logic and Conversation"
18. Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts"

V. Reference and Description

19. Frege, "On Sense and Nominatum"
20. Russell, "On Denoting"
21. Russell, "Descriptions"
22. Strawson, "On Referring"
23. Russell, "Mr. Strawson on Referring"
24. Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"

VI. Names

24. Mill, "Of Names"
26. Saul Kripke, "Naming and Necessity"
27. Putnam, "Meaning and Reference"
28. Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" [R]
29. Evans, "The Causal Theory of Names"

30. Searle, "Proper Names and Intentionality"
31. Putnam, Ch. 2, *Reasons, Truth, and History* [R]
32. Kripke, Lecture III, *Naming and Necessity* [R]

VII. The Nature of Language

33. Wittgenstein, selections from *Philosophical Investigations* [R]
34. Cook, "Wittgenstein on Privacy"
35. Kripke, "On Rules and Private Language"
36. Millikan, "Truth Rules, Hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox"
37. Lewis, "Languages and Language"
38. Chomsky, "Language and the Problems of Knowledge"

VIII. Metaphor

39. Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*.
40. Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean"
41. Martinich, "A Theory of Metaphor"
42. Gregory, "On Metaphoric Representation" [R]
43. Gibbs, "Why Many Concepts are Metaphorical" [R]
44. Gregory, "Reasons to Doubt the Present Evidence..." [R]
45. Reimer and Camp, "Metaphor" [R]