

Phil 210: Philosophy of Language

Fall 2008, Section 3

Time:	7:15-8:35pm, Mon & Weds
Place:	Biological Sciences 205, Cook-Douglass Campus
Website:	http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~wbstarr/teaching/
Instructor:	William Starr
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Office:	Davison 112; map
Office Hours:	4:30-6:30pm, Wednesday

Course Description:

Humans have a remarkable ability to create and use symbolic objects like money, maps and pictures. But what is it that makes an object *symbolic*? How can an object signify something 'beyond' itself? Or, in terminology we'll grow to love and hate: how can an object have a *meaning*? In this class, we will focus on thinking about human language as a system of symbolic objects. While there are many kinds of symbols, words and sentences are perhaps the most characteristic, impressive and intricate examples. Accordingly, studying the symbolic nature of language provides a good testing ground for attempts to answer our questions about symbolic objects. Although these questions are of intrinsic interest to many, when directed at language and thought, they have been argued to have a special relevance to both traditional philosophical topics (skepticism, logic, intentionality, moral values, the mind, the existence of God and many others) and various logical puzzles. This approach to traditional philosophical problems has become particularly predominant in philosophical work from the last century. In this course you will read the most important works in this tradition and acquire the skills and background necessary to understand it. This skill-set and background will be drawn from work in logic, linguistics, computer science and philosophy, but the only prerequisite is Phil 201 (Intro Logic). Classes will have a lecture format, but will allow ample time for questions and discussion. The lectures will involve focused discussion of specific problems and will connect with the readings by considering how they contribute to the development of solutions to those problems.

Textbooks & Readings:

I highly recommend bringing your text(s) to class with you.

Mandatory:

- Martinich, A.P. (ed.) (2006). *The Philosophy of Language*. **5th edn.**, New York: Oxford University Press.

Optional:

- Lycan, W. G. (2008). *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*. 2nd edn., New York: Routledge.
- Miller, A. (2007). *Philosophy of Language*. 2nd edn., Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queens University Press.

Other Readings:

- **IMPORTANT:** Some of the readings aren't in the mandatory textbook. All such readings will be available electronically on the course's Sakai site. I recommend printing these out and bringing them to class.

Advice on Reading:

- It is more important to have a basic grasp of the overall point of a reading than to understand any particular detail. Accordingly, I advise you to do each of the readings once quickly in a single sitting and then return to the details you missed. If, on a second reading, you can't sort out some specific detail, write down what you don't understand and bring it to class for discussion. Do your best to raise your question at a point in the class where that detail is relevant to what's being discussed. It is much more likely that you will get a satisfying answer if you ask your question at the appropriate time. In all the readings, it will be helpful to ask yourself 'what is the problem or issue at stake here?' and *then* 'what solutions or positions is the author arguing for here?'.

Grading:

- **76%:** 3 Exams (Exam 1: 25%, Exam 2: 25%, Exam 3: 26%)

All 3 exams will require you to answer 3 short-answer essay questions. Each exam will present you with 3 pairs of questions and you will have to select one from each pair to answer; 2 of your answers will be completed in-class, while the third may be completed out of class with the aid of notes and texts. Prior to each exam I will post 12 study-questions on Sakai. **The 6 exam questions will be among these study questions.** The exams will be non-cumulative, but there is a good deal of interdependence in the course material, so it may be necessary to revisit old notes and texts in studying for an exam.

- **24%:** 6 Pop Quizzes (4% each)

The pop quizzes will be given in class on unannounced days, often in the first 15 minutes. This is a large incentive to come to class and be on time. The pop quizzes will ask you to answer basic questions about the assigned reading or lecture for that day and how it relates to recent readings and lectures. Clearly, *you must do the readings to do well on the quizzes*, and you must do well on the quizzes to do well in the class!

- **Policy on Absences:** if you miss a quiz or an exam and want to make it up, you will need a Dean's Note to excuse your absence. This is just the official University policy. In all but the most extreme cases, you will be required to make up the missed quiz or exam within 10 days.

Academic Integrity:

In this course we will strictly adhere to the University Policy on Academic Integrity. If you are not familiar with it, view it at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml> ANY VIOLATION OF THIS POLICY WILL BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY TO THE OFFICE OF STUDENT JUDICIAL AFFAIRS. Violations will, at the very least, result in an F on the assignment in question, but are also likely to lead to an F in the class, suspension and other penalties.

Schedule

Readings marked with ‘*’ are optional. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Sakai as changes are made.

Date	Notes	Reading	Topics
<i>Week 1</i> 09.03		None	<i>Introduction</i> What is the Philosophy of Language?
<i>Week 2</i> 09.08 09.10		[1: selections], [26: §3.2], [26: Ch.3]* [30], [26: 126-140]*, [24: Ch.8]*	<i>Language & Philosophy</i> Verificationism and It’s Philosophical Consequences Quine on Analyticity
<i>Week 3</i> 09.15 09.17		[2: §§1.1-1.3, 2.1-2.2, 3.1-3.3] [2: §§7.1-7.2, 9.1-9.4] [15], [16: 1-5], [16]*	<i>Logic & Semantic Analysis</i> FOL Review Fregean Semantics & Logic
<i>Week 4</i> 09.22 09.24		[14], [17]* [32], [24: Ch.2], [33]*	<i>Attitudes, Descriptions</i> Fregean Sense, The Attitudes Russell’s Theory of Descriptions
<i>Week 5</i> 09.29 10.01		[21: selections], [24: Ch.3]* [28], [9], [24: Ch.4]*	<i>Names</i> Are Names Descriptions? Direct Reference, Causal Theory
<i>Week 6</i> 10.06 10.08		None [31], [26: §§4.6-4.10]*	<i>Exam 1, Indeterminacy</i> Exam 1 Quine’s Indeterminacy Thesis
<i>Week 7</i> 10.13 10.15		[20: 1-20], [4: Ch.1] [20: 89-106, 138-146, §3.3.3]	<i>Linguistics</i> The Science of Language Syntactic Structure
<i>Week 8</i> 10.20 10.22		[5: Ch.5] [8: Ch.1], [27]*	<i>Linguistics & Semantics</i> Chomsky on meaning & language Frege, Montague
<i>Week 9</i> 10.27 10.29		[38] [39]	<i>Formal Semantics & Tarski</i> PWS, More Montague Tarski’s Theory of Truth
<i>Week 10</i> 11.03 11.05	Class Cancelled	[6], [23: Ch.4], [23: Ch.3]*	<i>Tarski & Davidsonian Semantics</i> Davidson’s Theory of Meaning

Date	Notes	Reading	Topics
<i>Week 11</i> 11.10 11.12		None [19], [24: Ch.7]	<i>Exam 2, Grice's Project</i> Exam 2 Grice's Project
<i>Week 12</i> 11.17 11.19		[37: Ch.6], [34: Ch.2]* [37: Ch.4]	<i>Searle on Language & Meaning</i> Speech Acts Language & Intentionality
<i>Week 13</i> 11.24 11.26	No Class; F Classes	[7], [40]*, [36]*	<i>Language & Computation</i> AI & Language
<i>Week 14</i> 12.01 12.03		[29] [3: Ch.1], [24: Ch.6]*, [18]*	<i>Meaning as Use</i> Meaning, Abilities & BIVs Meaning, Use and Proof
<i>Week 15</i> 12.08 12.10	Last Day of Classes	[22: selections], [26: Ch.5]*	<i>Kripkenstein: meaning skepticism</i> The Wittgensteinian Paradox Exam 3

References

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URL <http://www-csli.stanford.edu/LPL/>
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