

Syllabus: Philosophy 210: Philosophy of Language Winter 2016/2017

Instructor: Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini

Office Hours (electronic): Mondays 9:00 - 10:00 am (and by appointment)

Email: langwin17@gmail.com (all assignments should be submitted to this address)

Class Description

How do humans communicate? To what extent must we rely on fixed linguistic rules, and to what extent are we able to bend or break these rules to convey meanings as we see fit? In what respects do our uses of language go beyond merely describing the world to actively shape our attitudes and actions?

The goal of this course is to explore and critically assess a variety of answers to these questions. In the first half of the course, we will study a number of major theoretical concepts in the philosophy of language, including speaker meaning, speech acts, semantic content, convention, and implicature. In the second half of the course, we will apply these theoretical concepts to two important topics at the intersection of philosophy of language and contemporary politics: the cognitive effects of generic claims like *urban voters are liberal*, and the nature and impact of slurring speech.

Learning Objectives

First, this course will give you a detailed understanding of some of the most important issues in the philosophy of cognitive science. Second, this course is designed to help you develop crucial philosophical abilities like reconstructing and evaluating arguments, articulating your ideas in conversation, and writing clearly and cogently. Half of our meetings will be devoted to discussion. While I will guide these discussions, it will be up to you to formalize and criticize the arguments we find in our readings and engage with other students who might disagree with you about whether they are sound.

Assignments and Grading

There will be three significant course requirements. First, you will be required to complete a problem set or write a short (no more than one page!) response to the reading for each unit (with the exception of the last unit). Second, there will be one 900-1200 word paper. Third, there will be an on-campus final examination at the end of the course. If you are unable to come to campus on the date of the final examination, please let me know so that we can make arrangements with an online testing service.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Reading Responses/Problem Sets: 40%

- Term Paper: 30%
- Final examination: 30%

Textbook

There will be no textbook for this course. All required readings will be available for download on the course website.

Semester Overview

Unit 1:

Dates: December 23rd — December 25th

Reading: H.P. Grice, "Meaning"

Unit 2:

Dates: December 26th — December 27th

Reading: J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (pp. 1-7, 91-107)

Unit 3:

Dates: December 28th — December 29th

Reading: David Lewis, *Convention* (pp. 1-8, 36-51, 177-184)

Unit 4:

Dates: December 30th — January 1st

Reading: Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"

Unit 5:

Dates: January 2nd — January 3rd

Reading: Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference" (pp. 209-218)

Unit 6:

Dates: January 4th — January 5th

Reading: H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation"

Unit 7:

Dates: January 6th — January 8th

Reading: Sarah-Jane Leslie, "Carving Up the Social World with Generics"

Unit 8:

Dates: January 9th — January 10th

Reading: Luvell Anderson and Ernie Lepore, “Slurring Words”

Unit 9:

Dates: January 11th — January 13th

Reading: Lynne Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games”

JANUARY 12TH — TERM PAPER DUE AT 5 PM EST

JANUARY 13TH — FINAL EXAM, 3-6 PM EST, ROOM SC 216

Lectures

There will be two short lecture videos associated with each unit. You are encouraged to watch them prior to doing the reading to orient yourself, but *they are not intended to replace the readings, and you will be responsible for material discussed in the readings but not the lectures.*

The lectures videos will be posted on or before the first day of each unit.

Lateness Policy

Problem sets and reading responses may not be turned in late. Other assignments may be turned in late, but will be subject to a one-letter-grade penalty per day late (a one-letter-grade drop is the difference between an A and a B and between a B+ and a C+).

If you would like an extension on an assignment, you must notify me at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline for that assignment. Extensions will be granted on a discretionary basis.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism of any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. For more information on what constitutes plagiarism, see: <http://wp.rutgers.edu/courses/plagiarism>. Please note that submitting the same material for credit on more than one assignment, whether in the same class or in different classes, is self-plagiarism and will be treated like any other form of plagiarism.

Collaboration

There are two kinds of collaborators. *Reviewers* offer comments on a pre-existing piece of writing. They are not responsible for the writing or major aspects of the argument of the pieces on which they comment. You are encouraged to seek reviewers for your pieces

of writing. Please acknowledge your reviewers by name in a footnote at the end of your essay.

Co-authors enter into the creative process with the author. They are responsible for significant parts of the writing and/or argument of the pieces which they co-author. You are not permitted to submit co-authored work for credit in this course.

Corrupt Files

It is your responsibility to ensure that you provide your written work to me in a format I can access. If you submit a corrupt file, I will do my best to notify you as soon as possible. It is then your responsibility to send me another copy of the file in a timely manner. This means it is very important that you open and read emails from me. If I request a second copy of a file and you do not reply in a timely manner, I will regard the assignment as not having been submitted.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Every effort will be made to accommodate students who present a valid Letter of Accommodations. For more information, see: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/my-accommodations/letter-of-accommodations>

Religious Observance

I am happy to accommodate special needs related to students' religious practices. However, I require that you notify me in writing within the first two weeks of class if you will need such accommodation at any point during the semester.

No Extra Credit

There will be no opportunities to earn extra credit in this course.

Confidentiality

Please note that I am required to report certain sensitive information you might relate to me to the University. If you would like to confidentially report sensitive information, you may do so through CAPS. For more information, see: <http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/>.