

PHILOSOPHY 448: PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
M 2:30-3:50 PM/W 1:00-2:20 PM
SMITH HALL 241
SPRING 2020

Instructor: Cameron Domenico Kirk-Giannini
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COURSE 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 areas of active research: the meanings of metaphors and the relationship between language and politics.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- By critically engaging with the course material, students will gain a detailed understanding of some of the most important issues in the philosophy of language.

- Through class discussion and structured writing exercises, students will develop crucial philosophical abilities like re-constructing and evaluating arguments, articulating ideas in conversation, and writing clearly and cogently.

TEXTBOOK

There will be no textbook for this course. All readings will be made available online.

ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING

There will be three significant course requirements. First, students will be required to attend class and participate in discussion of the course material. Second, there will be two 900-1200 word papers written in response to prompts related to the themes of the course units. Third, there will be a midterm examination (~1.5 hours) covering roughly the first half of the course material and a final examination (~1.5 hours) covering roughly the second half of the course material.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Attendance and class participation: 20%
- Paper 1: 20%
- Paper 2: 20%
- Midterm exam: 20%
- Final exam: 20%

SEMESTER OVERVIEW

Week 1 (Week of Monday 1/20):

Reading: None

1/22 (W): First Meeting (Introduction)

**PART I: FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS IN
SEMANTICS AND PRAGMATICS**

Week 2 (Week of Monday 1/27):

Reading: H.P. Grice, "Meaning"

1/27 (M): Discussion (I)

1/29 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 3 (Week of Monday 2/3):

Readings: J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*
(selections)

2/3 (M): Discussion (I)

2/5 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 4 (Week of Monday 2/10):

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

2/10 (M): Discussion (I)

2/12 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 5 (Week of Monday 2/17):

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

2/17 (M): Discussion (I)

2/19 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 6 (Week of Monday 2/24):

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

2/24 (M): Discussion (I)

2/26 (W): Discussion (II)

PART II: METAPHOR

Week 7 (Week of Monday 3/2):

Readings: Richard Moran, "Metaphor"

3/2 (M): Discussion (I)

3/4 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 8 (Week of Monday 3/9):

Reading: Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean"

3/9 (M): Discussion

3/11 (W): MIDTERM REVIEW SESSION

PAPER 1 DUE BY 5:00 PM EDT ON FRIDAY, 3/13

Week 9 (Week of Monday 3/23):

Readings: Elisabeth Camp, "Contextualism, Metaphor, and What is Said"

3/23 (M): MIDTERM EXAM

3/25 (W): Discussion

Week 10 (Week of Monday 3/30):

Reading: Ernie Lepore and Matthew Stone, "Against Metaphorical Meaning"

3/30 (M): Discussion (I)

4/1 (W): Discussion (II)

PART III: IDEOLOGY AND DOGWHISTLES

Week 11 (Week of Monday 4/6):

Readings: Tommie Shelby, "Ideology and Racism"

4/6 (M): Discussion (I)

4/8 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 12 (Week of Monday 4/13):

Readings: Sally Haslanger, "Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground"

4/13 (M): Discussion (I)

4/15 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 13 (Week of Monday 4/20):

Reading: Justin Khoo, "Code Words in Political Discourse"

4/20 (M): Discussion (I)

4/22 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 14 (Week of Monday 4/27):

Readings: Jennifer Saul, "Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language"

4/27 (M): Discussion (I)

4/29 (W): Discussion (II)

Week 15 (Week of Monday 5/4):

Reading: None

5/4 (M): FINAL REVIEW SESSION

PAPER 2 DUE BY 5:00 PM EDT ON WEDNESDAY, 5/6

FINAL EXAM 3:00 PM-6:00 PM EDT ON MONDAY, 5/11

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Vocal participation in class is an extremely important part of learning to do philosophy. There will be numerous opportunities to participate during both discussion sessions and lecture sessions. Feel free to ask a question at any time — remember, it's likely that someone else in the class has the same question and would benefit from you asking!

COURTESY

It is important that all classroom discussion be conducted calmly and respectfully. Professional courtesy and consideration for our classroom community are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences such as race, color, gender and gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, age, and veteran status.

Meaningful and constructive dialogue requires mutual respect, a willingness to listen, and tolerance of opposing points of view. Respect for individual differences and alternative viewpoints will be maintained at all times in this class. Our choices of words and use of language are critical components of respectful discourse as we work together to achieve the full benefits of creating a classroom in which all people can feel comfortable expressing themselves.

LATENESS POLICY

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

As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment

based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University's educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community.

Academic Integrity Policy: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academicintegrity-policy/>

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.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Counseling services are available at the Counseling Center, Room 101, Blumenthal Hall. For more information, call (973) 353-5805 or visit <http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/>. Please note that I am required to report certain sensitive information you might relate to me to the University.

NO EXTRA CREDIT

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