

COURSE DESCRIPTION: PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

1. CONTENT

The goal of this course consists in providing a basic training in the methods employed by formal approaches towards natural language phenomena as defined by the intersection between *analytical philosophy* and formal linguistics. This general objective falls into three parts. On the one side, the participants will familiarize themselves with a number of analytic methods and learn how to use them as instruments in the study of natural language. Among others, acquaintance with these techniques will derive from a first exposure to the propositional calculus, (first order) extensional predicate logic, aspects of syllogistics, various definitions of truth and meaning, theories of entailment and implicature, type theory and the concept of (semantic) presupposition. Empirically, the analytic instruments will be mainly applied to questions surrounding the representation of meaning in native speakers' minds. Why is it, e.g., that speakers who hear the sentence *The brown horse was happy to win* know that there is only one brown horse, and that this brown horse won? How come that the presence of negation in *The brown horse wasn't happy to win* does not seem alter these intuitions? And why is it that speakers infer that the brown horse won when exposed to the sentence *The brown horse managed to win*, but fail to do so when hearing the negative statement *The brown horse didn't manage to win*?

Second, the results gained from the analysis of natural language phenomena will be matched with the positions on these issues which have been defended by traditional and recent philosophical trends. In this way, the participants may gain a better insight into the basic philosophical issues at stake, the philosophical background of various concepts now widely used in linguistics, the interdependencies of solutions and theories offered by different philosophical schools of thought, and the historical developments of certain ideas. Should the meaning of predicates such as *blue books* e.g. be modeled as a Platonic idea, as the collection of blue books, as a prototype or should it be represented as a mereological class of objects which stand in a whole-part relation? And what are the philosophical pitfalls each of these conceptions entails? In addition, the course will highlight systematic commonalities and differences between the goals pursued by linguistic and philosophical investigations. In particular, it will be intriguing to see whether linguistic as a discipline is already in a position which can be compared to that of the sciences in the 17c and 18c, when natural philosophy delegated systematic scientific research to physics, chemistry and other disciplines.

Thirdly, the course will outline how to build and test hypotheses, how to refute an argument, explicate different ways of theory design, and offer general considerations about methodology, heuristics and argumentation in deductive scientific systems.

2. GRADING

Grading is based on four components:

- Active participation in class. Since the contents of the course is only loosely based on texts, and the material presented grows incrementally in complexity, regular attendance is of extreme importance.
- Weekly small (oral) homework assignments
- An extensive set of written homework examples (midterm)
- Final exam (alternatively, participants are welcome to write a small paper)

3. OFFICE HOURS: Tuesday & Friday, 15⁰⁰ - 17⁰⁰, and by appointment.

4. TEXTS:

- Handouts
- Copies of papers
- Texts in bibliography (a copy of Lycan 2000 can be obtained from PC-copies)

5. SYLLABUS

Week & Date	Tuesday	Friday
1: Sept. 7 & 10	Intro: Why Philosophy of Language?	Different types of implicational relations and inferences
2: Sept. 14 & 17	The <i>logical form</i> of arguments and syllogisms	Propositional Calculus I: syntax and semantics of a formal language
3: Sept. 21 & 24	Propositional Calculus II	Truth and meaning
4: Sept. 28	From sentences types/tokens to ideas and propositions,	No class (Independence Day)
5: Oct. 5 & 8	The truth predicate: Soundness vs. Validity, Object vs. Meta language and the Liar Paradox	Tarski and Davidson on Truth conditions and meaning
6: Oct. 12 & 15	Compositionality and why sentence parts need meanings	Theories of reference (ideational, denotational, concepts)
7: Oct. 19 & 22	Quantified first order Predicate Logic	Midterm Review
8: Oct. 26 & 29	Definite descriptions I: Frege, Meinong and Russell	Definite descriptions II: Pragmatic accounts (Grice, Donnellan, Strawson)
9: Nov. 2 & 5	Opacity, intensionality and propositional attitudes: Frege, Carnap and Quine	Intensionality and modality in a possible worlds semantics
10: Nov. 9 & 12	On Intensionality and identity: Lewis' Counter Part theory	Indefinites and Bare Plurals
11: Nov. 16 & 19	(In)definites and types of anaphora	(Generalized) Quantifiers and noun phrase interpretation in natural language
12: Nov. 23 & 26	The mass - count distinction and mereologies	Actions, events, aspect and merologies
13: Nov. 30 & Dec. 3	The Language of Thought Hypothesis	Theories of meaning

SELECTED REFERENCES

Grayling, A.C. 1997. *An Introduction to Philosophical Logic*. Third Edition. Oxford: Blackwell

Lycan, William G. 2000. *Philosophy of Language. A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, Kenneth 1998. *Truth and Meaning. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Course Descriptions. Navigation Menu +. Philosophy.Â Topics include: the nature of perception; what human language reveals about the mind; the basis of morality and altruism; how sexual selection has shaped human psychology; and the cognitive science of religious and spiritual belief. We will discuss tools, theories, and assumptions from philosophy, psychology, computer science, linguistics, anthropology, behavioral economics, and neuroscience. This course explores the nature of meaning and truth, and their bearing on the use of language in communication. No knowledge of logic or linguistics is presupposed.Â Home Â» Courses Â» Linguistics and Philosophy Â» Introduction to Philosophy of Language. Introduction to Philosophy of Language. Course Home. Syllabus. Philosophy of Language is the reasoned inquiry into the origins of language, the nature of meaning, the usage and cognition of language, and the relationship between language and reality.Â For a time, in the 20th Century philosophical branches of Analytic Philosophy and Ordinary Language Philosophy circles, philosophy as a whole was understood to be purely a matter of Philosophy of Language. The Nature of Language. Back to Top.Â He described proper names of people or places as abbreviated definite descriptions (the name standing in for a more detailed description of who or what the person or place really is), and considered them not to be meaningful on their own and not directly referential.