

Philosophy of Language & Philosophy of Mind

Philosophy 206, Spring 2012

Monday & Thursday 2:35-3:50 | Hollander Hall 40

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Language and mind have been two of the premier research areas of 20th century philosophy. Each has been studied independently of the other, with the philosophy of language dominating the first half of the century and the philosophy of mind surging in the second half. The philosophy of language does not study particular human languages. Rather, it focuses on more abstract questions of language itself, including how sentences mean what they do, how names refer to individuals or natural kinds, how we can talk about non-existent things, and whether (and how) two sentences can mean the same thing. The philosophy of mind in 20th century analytic philosophy includes the traditional challenges of the mind/body problem, but also aims at assessing the prospects of particular sciences of the mind such as scientific psychology and neuroscience.

Philosophies of language and mind have also enjoyed a fruitful liaison, as much of the technical apparatus of the philosophy of language has been used to illuminate the mind. The other side of this coin is that language is fairly obviously something that minds achieve, and some prominent theories of linguistic meaning have emphasized psychological elements of language use.

In this course we will pursue an introduction to these two topics. Our encounters with both will, out of necessity, be preliminary. The course is intended to prepare students for more advanced research on either language or mind, or in the areas of philosophy (such as epistemology, metaphysics, and parts of ethics) that draw on these fields.

REQUIRED TEXTS (Available at Water Street Books)

Lycan, William (2008). *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction, 2nd Edition*. London: Routledge.

Wittgenstein, L. (1953/1973). *Philosophical Investigations*. Translated by Anscombe, G.E.M. New York: Macmillan.

Additional required readings are available in the course reading packet.

GRADING

1. *Participation*

Discussion is essential to the vitality of the seminar. Thoughtful participation in our discussions is also one indicator that you are reading carefully. Thus, the instructor reserves the privilege of treating participation as constituting up to 10% of the final grade.

Your first priority is reading the assignments carefully and working diligently on the writing for the course. Thoughtful, honest, and respectful

participation derives from these. Every effort will be made to ensure that the class is a welcoming forum for sharing serious ideas. In addition, participation is more inclusive than many students realize. Being attentive and engaged in class, asking clarificatory questions, and discussing aspects of the course with the instructor during office hours all fall under this heading.

Laptops are not welcome in class.

2. *Weekly writing assignments*

You are required to write 10 short papers. These short paper assignments are intended to stimulate class discussion and to help you master the material.

Your early efforts on the weekly assignments may be primarily expository. For the first two or three papers, I prefer that you summarize one or two crucial themes of the reading for that week. It is appropriate for your papers to begin with, e.g., "Bertrand Russell claims that...." Your goal would then be to elaborate and put into your own words Russell's arguments. Please keep direct quotations to a minimum (one or two short quotations in a paper of this length is acceptable), but be sure to include page references when attributing a view or citing a passage.

By the third or fourth weekly paper, my expectations will change: I will begin looking for a more critical engagement with the readings. While it will be acceptable for your later weekly papers to begin with exegesis, you should also aim to offer some response to philosophical topics we encounter. Please keep in mind that by "critical engagement" I do not mean to demand *criticism*. You are welcome to flag your disagreements with the authors we have studied, but you are equally encouraged to develop ideas in a positive vein.

You are required to write on the primary sources rather than on the Lycan introductory material.

For any given week, you may write for EITHER our Monday meeting or our Thursday meeting. The goal is to have you write on readings *before* they have been discussed in class. Papers will be due at the beginning of the class you write for.

Not counting the first class meeting, and not counting the week when the essay on language is due (since you are not expected to write a weekly essay that week) there are 11 weeks of class. Again, you are required to write for only 10 of these weeks.

About 2 pages. Typewritten, double spaced in a 12 point font. No title page. 30% of final grade.

3. *Two Seminar Papers*

These papers are an opportunity for you to engage the themes of the course in a sustained and serious manner. You may write on the suggested paper topics (find links below) or you may propose another topic to pursue. The paper on language is due by the beginning of class on 15 March. There will be no extensions. The paper on mind is due by 5:00pm on 18 May.

You are not expected to seek additional sources for final papers, though you may.

8-10 pages. Typewritten, double spaced in a 12 point font. No title page.
60% of final grade with each paper weighted equally.

Grading on all written work will be anonymous. Please turn in all of your papers with only your Williams ID number on it (in some unobtrusive place, such as the back page). Papers must reflect original thoughts and ideas. Any direct quotations or paraphrased material from outside sources must be credited and footnoted in your favorite style. Violation of this constitutes plagiarism. If you have questions about how the honor code applies to written work, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Anonymous grading is one way of assuring that the collegiality of our interactions does not cloud my assessment of your work. Grading blindly is not a perfect mechanism for this purpose. One crucial disadvantage to anonymous grading is that the instructor will not know when your work is systematically inadequate and will typically not approach you with concerns about your writing. As a result, there is an additional burden of maturity and responsibility on your shoulders. You must elect to visit office hours and to seek out informal opportunities to improve your writing and research.

CLASS RESOURCES

The instructor holds office meetings each week in North Academic Building 306. They are:

Tuesdays 2:30-4
Thursdays 1-2:30

Additional times are available by special arrangement. Students are welcome to visit individually or in groups.

Students with disabilities who may need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to set up an appointment to meet with me as soon as possible and to contact the Dean's Office (at extension 4262) to better insure that accommodations are provided in a timely manner.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

(For each class meeting, you are advised to read the material in the order presented in the schedule)

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

February	Discussion:	Reflections on Language, Mind, and 20th century Anglo-American Philosophy
1	Readings:	None
<i>Wednesday</i>		

6	Discussion:	Reference
	Readings:	Lycan, Chapter 1, "Introduction: Meaning and Reference" Frege, "On Sense and Reference" Frege, "Letter to Jourdain"
9	Discussion:	Reference
	Readings:	Russell, "Descriptions" Lycan, <i>from</i> Chapter 2, "Definite Descriptions," pp. 9-19
13	Discussion:	Reference
	Readings:	Strawson, "On Referring" Lycan, <i>from</i> Chapter 2, "Definite Descriptions," pp. 19-43
16	Discussion:	Reference
	Readings:	Russell, "Mr. Strawson On Referring" Donellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions,"
20	Discussion:	Names
	Readings:	Lycan, Chapter 3, "Proper names: the description theory" Searle, "Proper Names" Kripke, <i>from Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture II
23	Discussion:	Names
	Readings:	Putnam, "Meaning and Reference" Lycan, Chapter 4, "Proper names: Direct Reference and the Causal-Historical Theory"
27	Discussion:	Use Theories
	Readings:	Lycan, Chapter 5, "Traditional Theories of Meaning" Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , ¶1-¶43 <i>skim</i> Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , ¶44-¶142 Lycan, Chapter 6, "'Use' Theories"
March 1	Discussion:	Psychological Theories
	Readings:	Lycan, Chapter 7, "Psychological Theories" Grice, "Meaning"
5	Discussion:	Verificationism
	Readings:	Lycan, Chapter 8, "Verificationism" Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"

- 8 Discussion: Verificationism
Readings: Quine, "Translation and Meaning"
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- 12 Discussion: Truth-Condition Theories
Readings: Davidson, "Radical Interpretation"
Lycan, Chapter 9, "Truth-Condition Theories: Davidson's Program"
Lycan, Chapter 10, "Truth-Condition Theories: Possible Worlds and Intensional Semantics"
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- 15 Discussion: The Big Picture
Readings: *from* Burge, "Philosophy of Language and Mind: 1950-1990," pp. 3-29

PAPER ON LANGUAGE DUE (suggested topics)

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

- April Discussion: Substance Dualism
2 Readings: Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, Meditations II & VI
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- 5 Discussion: Wittgenstein on Mind
Readings: Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ¶244-¶450
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- 9 Discussion: Wittgenstein on Mind
Readings: Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ¶451-¶693
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- 12 Discussion: Behaviorism
Readings: Hempel, "The Logical Analysis of Psychology"
Putnam, "Brains and Behavior"
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- 16 Discussion: Identity Theory
Readings: Smart, "Sensations and Brain Processes"
Kripke, *from* "Identity and Necessity,"
What the symbols in the Kripke reading mean
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- 19 Discussion: Thoughts
Readings: Sellars, *from* "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind"
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23 Discussion: Functionalism
Readings: Putnam, "The Nature of Mental States"

26 Discussion: Functionalism
Readings: Block, "What is Functionalism?"

30 Discussion: (Anti) Functionalism
Readings: Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Computers"

May Discussion: Propositional Attitudes
3 Readings: Dennett, "The Intentional Strategy and Why it Works"

7 Discussion: Propositional Attitudes
Readings: Fodor, "Propositional Attitudes"

10 Discussion: Propositional Attitudes
Readings: Churchland, "Eliminativism Materialism and the Propositional Attitudes"

18 Finish Burge, *from* "Philosophy of Language and Mind: 1950-1990," pp. 29-49 (initially assigned on 3/17)

@5:00pm

ESSAY ON MIND DUE (suggested topics)
