Philosophy of Language

113.365
Spring 2024

Instructor: Junhyo Lee
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Class: Tuesdays and Thursdays 09:30 am – 10:45 pm, 7-218

Course Descriptions

In this course, we will outline the main topics in the philosophy of language in the tradition of analytic philosophy. The philosophy of language addresses questions like the following: "What is the meaning of language?" (semantics), "How do linguistic expressions get their meanings in the first place?" (meta-semantics), "How do we use linguistic expressions to convey more than what they conventionally says?" (pragmatics) and "What should linguistic expressions mean?" (conceptual engineering). In this course, we will examine various answers to these questions through the works of some of the leading philosophers including Frege, Russell, Austin, Grice, Stalnaker, Lewis, and Kripke. Furthermore, we will also see how the inquiry into the nature of meaning can shed new light on philosophical problems in other areas of philosophy, such as ethics, social and political philosophy (applied philosophy of language).

Course Objectives

Students will be able to:

1. Explain important concepts in philosophy of language such as "truth-condition", "proposition", "rigid designator", "speech act", "common ground", "conversational implicature", "conventional implicature", "presupposition", etc.
2. Understand important classic papers in the philosophy of language or related fields.
3. Charitably reconstruct arguments from texts and evaluate them.
4. Apply conceptual and logical tools in philosophy of language to practical problems.

Required Texts

1. Classical papers. All required readings will be uploaded to the course website in advance.

Optional Texts

1. Alexander Miller. 2018. *Philosophy of Language* (3rd ed). Routledge.
2. William Lycan. 2018. *Philosophy of Language* (3rd ed). Routledge.
3. Colin McGinn. 2015. *Philosophy of Language – The Classics Explained*, MIT Press.
4. Scott Soames. 2012. *Philosophy of Language*, Princeton University Press.
5. A.M. Martinich & David Sosa (eds.). 2012. *The Philosophy of Language* (6th ed). Oxford University Press.
6. Michael Beaney (ed.). 1997. *The Frege Reader*. Blackwell.
7. John Austin. 1962/1975. *How to do Things with Words*. Harvard University Press.
8. Paul Grice. 1991. *Studies in the Way of Words*, Harvard University Press.
9. Saul Kripke. 1980. *Naming and Necessity*, Harvard University Press.

10. Irene Heim & Angelika Kratzer. 1998. *Semantics in Generative Grammar*. Blackwell.
11. Kai von Fintel & Irene Heim. 2020. *Intensional Semantics*, MIT.

Evaluation

Mid-Term Exam (30%): The mid-term exam will be mainly about truth-conditional semantics, which is the first part of the course. The midterm exam will be on Wednesday of Week 9 (i.e., Wednesday, May 3). Prior to the exam, sample exam questions will be made available.

Final Exam (30%): The final exam will be mainly about pragmatic theories and their applications to practical problems. The final exam will be on Wednesday of Week 15 (i.e., Wednesday, June 14). Prior to the exam, sample exam questions will be made available.

Term Paper (30%): Students are required to submit a final paper by midnight on Monday, June 19. Sample topics will be distributed over the course of the semester. You may choose one of the sample topics or choose a free topic on your own. If you choose a free topic, you are encouraged to consult with your instructor before writing a paper. The term paper should be more than just a good summary of what you have learned in class. It should be made clear what new contributions you have made. The paper should be around 2000 words (font size 12, double-spaced) and should be submitted as a Microsoft Word file or a PDF file. Late submissions will be penalized proportionally to the number of days late. For example, if a paper is due by midnight on Monday and you turn your paper in at 1 am on Tuesday, a paper that would otherwise have received an A0 will receive an A- for being one day late.

Attendance (10%): Attendance is mandatory and will be checked starting in the second week, after the drop/add period. Students will have up to two absences without penalty for any reason. After that, each absence will be penalized by 0.5%. Students who need to miss class for a valid reason must contact me by email in advance.

Course Policies

Technology: You can use internet-enabled laptops or tablets for course-related purposes such as taking notes. Please silence all other electronic devices such as cell phones not to disrupt the class.

Accommodating Disabilities: It is essential for every student to have the same opportunity for success in the classroom, so I look forward to cooperating with any student who is registered with disability services to satisfy all recommended accommodations. In order for me to do so, you need to bring this registration to my attention at the beginning of the semester. If I don't know that you require special accommodations, I cannot arrange for them. If you are not registered with disability services and believe that you may have a legitimate need for some accommodation, you should contact them at https://www.snu.ac.kr/campuslife/aid/disabled.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated. This means that the consequence of any form of plagiarism or cheating will result in an 'F' for the course, and students will be referred to student judicial affairs for possible further penalties. If you have any questions whatsoever about what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, you should ask me directly in office hours, before or after class, or by e-mail.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic
Part 1	
Week 1	**Overview & Basic Concepts in the Philosophy of Language**
Week 2	**The Origins of Truth-Conditional Semantics** Frege, "On Sense and Reference" Frege, "Function and Concept"
Week 3	**Executing the Fregean Program** Heim & Kratzer, *Semantics in Generative Grammar*, Ch.1&2
Week 4	**Possible World Semantics** Kaplan, "Demonstratives" (pp.489-510) *von Fintel & Heim, *Intensional Semantics,* Ch.1 (optional)
Week 5	**Definite Descriptions** Russell, "On Denoting" *Strawson, "On Referring" (optional) *Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions" (optional) *Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" (optional)
Week 6	**Names** Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1&2 Stalnaker, "Assertion" *Soames, "The Modal Argument" (optional)
Week 7	**Names** Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1&2 Stalnaker, "Assertion" *Soames, "The Modal Argument" (optional)
Week 8	Review Midterm Exam

Part 2	
Week 9	**Tools: Grice's Theory of Implicature & Austin's Speech Act Theory**
	Grice, "Logic and Conversation"
	Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, Lectures 8-12
	*Stalnaker, "Common Ground" (optional)
	*Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game" (optional)
Week 10	**Application: Langton's Speech Act Theory of Pornography**
	Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts"
	*Langton, "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game" (optional)
	*Maitra, "Subordinating Speech", "Silencing Speech" (optional)
	*Kukla, "Performative Force, Convention, and Discursive Injustice" (optional)
Week 11	**Tools: Grice's and Lewis's Meta-Semantics**
	Grice, "Meaning"
	Lewis, "Languages and Language"
Week 12	**Application: Lying and Misleading**
	Berstler, "What's the Good of Language? On the Moral Distinction Between Lying and Misleading"
Week 13	**Conceptual Engineering on Sexual Orientation**
	Dembroff, "What is Sexual Orientation?"
Week 14	**Online Communication**
	Thi Nguyen, "How Twitter Gamifies Communication"
Week 15	Review
	Final Exam