

PHILOSOPHY 550: SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
WINTER 2016

Professor Eric Swanson
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Office hours: Thursdays 1–3, and by appointment.

In this seminar we will study interactions between conversational context, ideology, and social coordination. We will use a range of linguistic expressions and devices as case studies, including slurs, apologies, ‘dog-whistle’ speech, propaganda, implicatures, and covert manipulators of context. We will read foundational work in philosophy of language and political philosophy, very broadly construed, in addition to reading accessible recent work in social and political philosophy of language.

COURSE WEB SITE

On Canvas, at <https://umich.instructure.com/courses/64499>

SEMINAR MEETINGS

Mondays 4:10–6:30, in 1164 Angell Hall

I have to reschedule our April 4 meeting to another date. There’s some possibility that we’ll reschedule our April 11 meeting (Seana Shiffrin will be speaking at the law school then, possibly on free speech issues.) But let’s talk about rescheduling over email, later.

GRADING (FOR ENROLLED STUDENTS ONLY)

- 25% each: Two papers, six to eight pages each, due over email to me on March 11 and April 25. (This is the default arrangement, but if some other arrangement would work better for you (e.g., writing a draft of a longer paper and then polishing it), please talk to me about what you’d like to do by February 18. Everyone will have something substantial due on March 11, and on April 25.)
- 20%: Short (less than one page) reading responses, due over email to me every Sunday night, raising questions about or making comments on the reading we’ll discuss the next day.
- 20%: *Active* participation in seminar.
- 10%: A brief presentation. Because there are more enrolled students than sessions, we’ll have to have two presentations in at least a few sessions. I think this will work best if we have two kinds of presentations:
 1. presentations of one comment on and two questions about a reading or readings;
 2. presentations that summarize one of the optional readings.

By Wednesday January 13, please email me to tell me your top five presentation options. (An ordered list would be helpful!)

Optional readings are genuinely optional. I’d rather have you read the assigned readings especially carefully than have you skim them and the optional readings. Also, I could have put on many more readings, so please ask me if you’re particularly interested in a given topic!

SCHEDULE

January 11 Pragmatics	J. L. Austin, excerpts from <i>How to Do Things with Words</i> (from <i>The Discourse Reader</i> , Jaworski and Coupland, eds.) Nancy Bauer, chapters 6 and 7 of <i>How to Do Things with Pornography</i> : “What Is to Be Done with Austin?” and “On Philosophical Authority” Optional: Jürgen Habermas, “Hermeneutic and Analytic Philosophy: Two Complementary Versions of the Linguistic Turn”
January 18	No class—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
January 25 Pragmatics	Betty J. Birner, excerpt from <i>Introduction to Pragmatics</i> : “The Domain of Pragmatics” Paul Grice, excerpts from “Logic and Conversation” (from <i>The Discourse Reader</i> , Jaworski and Coupland, eds.) Robert Stalnaker, “Pragmatic Presuppositions” V. N. Voloshinov, excerpt from <i>Marxism and the Philosophy of Language</i> Optional: Rae Langton, “Beyond Belief” (from <i>Speech and Harm</i> , Maitra and McGowan, eds.) Optional: David Lewis, “Languages and Language”
February 1 Pragmatics	David Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game” Rae Langton and Caroline West, “Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game” Optional: Catharine MacKinnon, excerpt from <i>Only Words</i> : “Equality and Speech”
February 8 Pragmatics	Judith Butler, chapter 1 of <i>Excitable Speech</i> : “Burning Acts, Injurious Speech” Mary Kate McGowan, “On ‘Whites Only’ Signs and Racist Hate Speech: Verbal Acts of Racial Discrimination” (from <i>Speech and Harm</i> , Maitra and McGowan, eds.) Optional: Mary Kate McGowan, “Conversational Exercitives: Something Else We Do with Words”
February 15 Ideology	Antonio Gramsci, excerpt from <i>The Prison Notebooks</i> W. E. B. Du Bois, chapters 5 and 6 of <i>Dusk of Dawn</i> : “The Concept of Race” and “The White World” Optional: Alain Locke, “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy” Optional: Alain Locke, “Cultural Relativism and Ideological Peace” Optional: M. M. Bakhtin / P. N. Medvedev, chapter 1 of <i>The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship</i> : “The Study of Ideologies and Its Immediate Tasks”
February 22 Race	Anthony Appiah, “The Uncompleted Argument: Du Bois and the Illusion of Race” Rae Langton, Sally Haslanger, and Luvell Anderson, “Language and Race” Sally Haslanger, “Language, Politics, and ‘The Folk’” (from <i>Resisting Reality</i>) Optional: David Livingstone Smith, chapter 6 of <i>Less than Human: Why We Demean, Enslave, and Exterminate Others</i> : “Race”
February 29	No class—Winter break
March 7 Generics	Sarah-Jane Leslie, “The Original Sin of Cognition” Sally Haslanger, “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground” (from <i>Resisting Reality</i>) Optional: Walter Lippmann, chapter 6 of <i>Public Opinion</i> : “Stereotypes” Optional: Manfred Krifka et al, “Genericity: An Introduction”
March 11	First paper due

<p>March 14 Power</p>	<p>Frantz Fanon, chapter 1 of <i>Black Skin, White Masks</i>: “The Black Man and Language” Ishani Maitra, “Subordinating Speech” (from <i>Speech and Harm</i>, Maitra and McGowan, eds.) Naïma Boussofara-Omar, “Learning the ‘Linguistic Habitus’ of a Politician: A Presidential Authoritative Voice in the Making” Optional: Pierre Bourdieu, excerpts from <i>Language and Symbolic Power</i> (from <i>The Discourse Reader</i>, Jaworski and Coupland, eds.)</p>
<p>March 21 Slurs</p>	<p>Lynne Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games” (from <i>Speech and Harm</i>, Maitra and McGowan, eds.) Eric Swanson, “Slurs and Ideologies” Optional: Elisabeth Camp, “Slurring Perspectives” Optional: Jane Hill, chapter 5 of <i>The Everyday Language of White Racism</i>: “Covert Racist Discourse: Metaphors, Mocking, and the Racialization of Historically Spanish-Speaking Populations in the United States”</p>
<p>March 28 Propaganda</p>	<p>Jason Stanley, Introduction through chapter 2 of <i>How Propaganda Works</i> Optional: Carl Schmitt, excerpt from <i>The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy</i> Optional: John Dewey, “Practical Democracy: Review of Walter Lippmann’s <i>The Phantom Public</i>” Optional: Plato, books 2 and 8 of <i>The Republic</i> Optional: C. D. C. Reeve, “Philosophy, Politics, and Rhetoric in Aristotle”</p>
<p>Date TBD Propaganda</p>	<p>Jason Stanley, chapters 3 and 4 of <i>How Propaganda Works</i> Optional: Ernst Cassirer, chapter 18 of <i>The Myth of the State</i>: “The Technique of the Modern Political Myths” Optional: Hannah Arendt, chapter 11 section 1 of <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i>: “Totalitarian Propaganda” Optional: Joshua Cohen and Joel Rogers, “Knowledge, Morality, and Hope: The Social Thought of Noam Chomsky”</p>
<p>April 11 Dogwhistles</p>	<p>Tali Mendelberg, chapter 4 of <i>The Race Card</i>: “The Political Psychology of Implicit Communication” Jennifer Saul, “Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language” Optional: Tamar Szabó Gendler, “On the Epistemic Costs of Implicit Bias” Optional: Jules Holroyd and Joseph Sweetman, “The Heterogeneity of Implicit Bias”</p>
<p>April 18 Apologies</p>	<p>Nicholas Tavuchis, chapter 1 of <i>Mea Culpa: A Sociology of Apology and Reconciliation</i>: “The Social Import of Apology” Danielle Celermajer, chapter 2 of <i>The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies</i>: “Apologies as Speech Acts” Alice MacLachlan, “‘Trust Me, I’m Sorry’: The Paradox of Public Apology” Optional: Hannah Arendt, chapter 5 of <i>The Human Condition</i>: “Action” Optional: Hans-Georg Gadamer, excerpt from <i>Truth and Method</i>: “The Hermeneutic Priority of the Question” Optional: Jürgen Habermas, “A Genealogical Analysis of the Cognitive Content of Morality”</p>
<p>April 25</p>	<p>Second paper due</p>