

**PHI 565: Philosophy of Language**  
Fall 2006

**Instructor:** Prof. Ishani Maitra, Department of Philosophy  
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**Office hours:** Tuesdays 2:30–4p.m., and by appointment

**Class Meetings:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30a.m.–1:50p.m. in OG2 Room B.

**Course Description:** In this course, we will look at some central issues in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of language. We will begin with theories of reference, which attempt to account for the relationship between our language and the world. In this section, we will focus on definite descriptions (*the King of France, the man in the brown hat*), proper names (*Bill, Hillary*), and indexical expressions (*I, that*). Next, we will take up the notion of linguistic meaning, and look at some different strategies for giving the meanings of expressions in a language. Finally, we will concern ourselves with pragmatics, concentrating especially on the distinction between what is literally expressed by an utterance, and what is communicated in some other way (e.g., metaphorically). Readings for the course will include works by Frege, Russell, Strawson, Searle, Kripke, Grice, Davidson, and others.

**Course Requirements:**

1. Read the required pieces closely.
2. Regularly attend class.
  - Attendance in class is required, and essential for doing well in this course. If you have a good reason for missing class, e-mail me *before class* to let me know what the reason is.
3. Participate in class.
  - There will be plenty of opportunity during class time to ask questions, make comments, and respond to what I and your classmates say. Everyone is expected to come to class prepared to participate.
4. Write two papers.
  - Students enrolled in this course must write one midterm paper (5-6 pages in length), one term paper (10-12 pages in length), and take the final exam. Due dates for all paper assignments are noted in the course outline below. Please plan your semester accordingly.
  - For the midterm paper: a list of possible paper topics will be handed out in advance of the due date. You will be required to write on one of the topics on that list.
  - For the term paper: you should pick your own topic, and submit a description of the topic to me by the date indicated on the course outline. Term papers should be on some contemporary (i.e., within the last 10 years) discussion of a topic covered in this course.
  - I encourage everyone, but *especially* those with not much prior experience in the philosophy of language, to discuss rough drafts of each paper to me.
5. Take the final exam.
  - The final examination will be given during the regular finals week. The date and time are indicated on the course outline; the location will be announced later in the semester. The final exam will be cumulative.

**Grading:**

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|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Class attendance and participation: | 10% |
| One midterm paper:                  | 25% |
| One term paper:                     | 35% |
| Final exam:                         | 30% |

**Academic Honesty:** The following is Syracuse University's policy on academic honesty:

Syracuse University students shall exhibit honesty in all academic endeavors. Cheating in any form is not tolerated, nor is assisting another person to cheat. The submission of any work by a student is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions in it are the student's own except when properly credited to another. Violations of this principle include: giving or receiving aid in an exam or where otherwise prohibited, fraud, plagiarism, the falsification or forgery of any record, or any other deceptive act in connection with academic work. Plagiarism is the representation of another's words, ideas, programs, formulae, opinions, or other products of work as one's own either overtly or by failing to attribute them to their true source. (Section 1.0, University Rules and Regulations.)

Anyone in violation of this policy will *at least* receive a failing grade on the relevant assignment. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic dishonesty, you should look at <http://www-hl.syr.edu/cas-pages/PromAcademicHonesty.htm>, and come talk to me.

**Required Reading:**

*The Philosophy of Language, Fourth Edition*, edited by A.P. Martinich, Oxford University Press, 2001. Available at Follett's Orange Bookstore, in the Marshall Square Mall (which is not the same as the Syracuse University bookstore in the Schine Center).

**Recommended Reading** (available at Bird Library or can be ordered online):

1. William G. Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, Routledge, 2000.  
Extremely accessible introduction to the major issues in 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy of language. Covers nearly all the topics that we'll be addressing in this course.
2. Bob Hale and Crispin Wright, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, Blackwell, 1997.  
This book is in the Blackwell Companions to Philosophy series. Contains entries that describe the state of current research in a variety of areas in the philosophy of language, including several that we don't cover in this course.
3. Peter Ludlow, *Readings in the Philosophy of Language*, M.I.T. Press, 1997.  
Anthology covering some of the same topics we're covering in this course, but at a bit more advanced level. Also contains most of the articles in sections II and III of the reading list that are *not* contained in the Martinich reader.
4. Steven Davis, *Pragmatics: A Reader*, Oxford University Press, 1991.  
Excellent collection in several areas in pragmatics. Contains all the articles in section IV of the reading list that are *not* contained in the Martinich reader.

## Reading Schedule:

Readings with chapter numbers are in the Martinich anthology. Readings not in the anthology will be handed out in class.

In the course of the semester, readings may be added to or deleted from this list. All changes will be announced in class. Please be sure to keep track of changes.

### I. Meaning & Reference of Singular Terms

#### A. *Descriptions*

- Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting" (Chapter 14)
- Peter Strawson, "On Referring" (Chapter 16)
- Bertrand Russell, "Mr. Strawson on Referring" (Chapter 17)
- Keith Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions" (Chapter 18)
- Saul Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"

#### B. *Proper Names*

- Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Nominatum" (Chapter 13)
- John Searle, "Proper Names"
- Saul Kripke, Excerpt from *Naming and Necessity* (Chapter 20)
- Gareth Evans, "The Causal Theory of Names" (Chapter 22)

#### C. *Demonstratives*

- John Perry, "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" (Chapter 25)

### II. Theories of Meaning

#### A. *Precursors*

- Gottlob Frege, "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"

#### B. *The Gricean Program*

- Paul Grice, "Meaning" (Chapter 5)

#### C. *The Davidsonian Program*

- Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning" (Chapter 6)

#### D. *Possible Worlds Semantics*

- David Lewis, Excerpt from "General Semantics"

### III. Pragmatics

#### A. *Speech Acts and Illocutionary Force*

- J.L. Austin, "Performative Utterances" (Chapter 8)

#### B. *Implicature and Presuppositions*

- Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation" (Chapter 11)
- Robert Stalnaker, "Pragmatic Presuppositions"

#### C. *Metaphor*

- Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean" (Chapter 31)
- John Searle, "Metaphor"

## Course Outline:

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|---|--|
| Tuesday, August 29<br>Thursday, August 31       | <i>Introduction to the Course/§I Meaning &amp; Reference of Singular Terms</i> |
| Tuesday, September 5<br>Thursday, September 7   |  |
| Tuesday, September 12<br>Thursday, September 14 |  |
| Tuesday, September 19<br>Thursday, September 21 |  |
| Tuesday, September 26<br>Thursday, September 28 |  |
| Tuesday, October 3<br>Thursday, October 5       |  |
| Tuesday, October 10<br>Thursday, October 12     |  |
| Tuesday, October 17<br>Thursday, October 19     | <i>§II Theories of Meaning</i><br><b>Midterm Paper Due</b>                     |
| Tuesday, October 24<br>Thursday, October 26     | NO CLASS (Eid Ul Fitr)   |
| Tuesday, October 31<br>Thursday, November 2     |  |
| Tuesday, November 7<br>Thursday, November 9     |  |
| Tuesday, November 14<br>Thursday, November 16   | <i>§III Pragmatics</i>   |
| Tuesday, November 21<br>Thursday, November 23   | NO CLASS (Thanksgiving Break)  |
| Tuesday, November 28<br>Thursday, November 30   | <b>Term Paper Proposal Due</b>   |
| Tuesday, December 5<br>Thursday, December 7     | LAST CLASS   |

Wednesday, December 13 **Final Exam** (7:15-9:15p.m., location TBA)

Monday, December 18 **Term Paper Due**