

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2011–2012

**Philosophy 2260F: Introduction to
Philosophy of Language**

Fall Term 2011
MWF 1:30–2:30
SH-3307 (Somerville House)

Instructor: Emerson Doyle
Office Hours: STvH4136, M, F 2:30–3:30
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Description

This course is concerned with philosophical issues related to *language* as they have developed since the beginning of the twentieth century. We will focus our attention on attempts to answer several questions central to contemporary analytic philosophy, including: What does the meaning of a name, predicate, or sentence consist in? What is the relationship between meaning and truth? How can an analysis of language help us address epistemological, metaphysical, mathematical, and scientific problems?

The philosophy of language is one of the deepest and most interesting areas in all of philosophy, but it is also one of the most subtle and demanding. In order to succeed in this course, it will be crucial that students come to class prepared—you must be eager to ask questions and to discuss the readings. While there is no grade assigned for attendance, without the sustained analysis that class discussion provides, it will be very difficult to understand the material and thus to do well. Previous knowledge of formal logic, while helpful, is not required. Also keep in mind that the list of topics below is subject to change. We might end up spending less or more time on a particular topic, or our discussion might take us naturally toward some reading to be substituted for one below.

Texts

The readings for this class will all be available online. They will all appear on WebCT, and some are also hyperlinked below. You will need to use your UWO login on the [Western Libraries](#) website in order to view some of the articles using the hyperlinks below (or access them from a UWO computer).

Requirements

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| 15% | First Paper (3–4 pages, due October 5) |
| 30% | Second Paper (4–5 pages, due November 9) |
| 5% | Proposal for Term Paper (due the week of November 21) |
| 45% | Term Paper (7–10 pages, due December 7) |
| 5% | 2 Short Reflections |

Paper topics will be distributed in advance. Students may devise their own topic provided the topic is approved by me in advance. **Late papers** will be penalized by **3% per day** late, including weekends up to a maximum of 50%.

The **Term Paper** is expected be a significant piece of philosophy, displaying originality and critical thought. Thus you will need to spend a good bit of time thinking through your argument. Developing a 1–2 page **Proposal** will help you with this. Your Proposal will be handed back to you the class after you've submitted it. I encourage you to also make an appointment with me to discuss your project.

The **Short Reflections** can be handed in at any time **prior to the last week of class**, preferably on a Monday or Wednesday. These should be 1–2 page critical reflections on any topic we have covered in the course, or they can explore tangential material of your own investigation. If you have specific, extended questions, or would like to try out certain ideas (say paper topics) and receive feedback, this is the place to do it. Each reflection will be worth 2.5%. I will spend a little time in Friday's class going over interesting questions and comments brought up in that week's reflections.

Objectives

By the end of this course, students should be able to explain and evaluate the main philosophical arguments and positions discussed during the course. Hopefully you will find these topics interesting, puzzling, and enlightening. Students should also acquire and/or improve the skills necessary for analyzing and critically evaluating arguments, along with significantly improving their oral and written communication abilities. These general skills should be useful in other university courses, as well as in communication generally.

Department Policies

The **Department of Philosophy Policies and Guidelines**, which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses, are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Schedule

*Please be advised that the reading list is tentative.

Part 1: What is Philosophy of Language?

Sept. 9 – No assigned readings.

Logical and Philosophical Preliminaries

Sept. 12 – Carroll, L. “What the Tortoise Said to Achillies” ([1895](#))
– Smullyan, R. “§255. Another Version (of the Liar Paradox)” (1978)
– Russell, B. “Vagueness” ([1923](#))

Part 2: Reference and Meaning

Sense and Descriptivism

Sept. 14, Sept. 16 – Frege, G. “On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*” (1892)
– Frege, G. “Letter to Jourdain” (undated)

Sept. 19, Sept. 21, Sept. 23 – Russell, B. “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description” (1912)
– Russell, B. “Descriptions” (1919)

Criticisms of Descriptivism

Sept. 26, Sept. 28, Sept. 30 – Strawson, P.F. “On Referring” ([1950](#))
– Russell, B. “Mr. Strawson on Referring” ([1957](#))
– Donnellan, K. “Reference and Definite Descriptions” ([1966](#))

Part 3: Verificationism and Metaphysics

The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning

Oct. 3, Oct. 5 – Frege, G. Selections from *The Foundations of Arithmetic* (1884)
– Carnap, R. “The Elimination of Metaphysics Through Logical Analysis of Language” (1932)

First Paper Due on Oct. 5

Oct. 7 – Carnap, R. “Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology” (1950)

Criticisms of Verificationism

Oct. 12, Oct. 14 – Hempel, C. “The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning” (1950)
– Quine, W.V.O. “Two Dogmas of Empiricism” (1951)

Oct. 17, Oct. 19, Oct. 21 – Quine, W.V.O. “Carnap and Logical Truth” (1963)
 – Carnap, R. “W.V. Quine on Logical Truth” (1963)

A Return to Metaphysics

Oct. 24, Oct. 26, Oct. 28 – Kripke, S. “Naming and Necessity” (1972)
 – Putnam, H. “Meaning and Reference” ([1973](#))

Criticisms of Singular Reference

Oct. 31, Nov. 2, Nov. 4 – Donnellan, K. “The Contingent A Priori and Rigid Designators” ([1977](#))

Part 4: Mind and the World—Propositional Attitudes

Some Problems Regarding Propositional Attitudes

Nov. 7, Nov. 9 – Quine, W.V.O. “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes” ([1956](#))

Second Paper Due on Nov. 9

Nov. 11 – Kripke, S. “A Puzzle About Belief” ([1979](#))

Two Kinds of Beliefs

Nov. 14, Nov. 16, Nov. 18 – Davidson, D. “On Saying That” ([1968](#))
 – Burge, T. “On Davidson’s ‘Saying That’” (1986)

Nov. 21, Nov. 23, Nov. 25 – Burge, T. “Belief *De Re*” ([1977](#))
 – Jeshion, R. “Acquaintanceless *De Re* Belief” ([2002](#))

Proposal for Term Paper Due This Week

Part 5: Intentions and Meaning

Nov. 28, Nov. 30, Dec. 2 – Grice, H.P. “Meaning” ([1957](#))
 – Grice, H.P. “Logic and Conversation” (1975)

Dec. 5 – Lewis, D. “Languages and Language” (1975)

Dec. 7 – Wrap-Up and Review

Term Paper Due on Dec. 7