

Philosophy of Language

Hanoch Ben-Yami

2017–18 Fall Term

No. of Credits: 2. No. of ECTS credits: 4.

Time Period of the Course: one semester.

Course Level: Core MA.

We shall study several central topics in contemporary philosophy of language. Each of these topics is central not only in focusing much discussion but also in influencing the discussion of other philosophical issues. Due to the variety of topics, none will be exhaustively discussed in the course, but the hope is that the main approaches to the problems, their motivation and presuppositions would be clearly delineated. The works discussed will be by Quine, Grice, Strawson, Austin, Kripke, Putnam, Donnellan, Stalnaker, Wittgenstein. Students who write a paper for the course are expected to choose one of the topics as subject of their term paper and to extend and deepen the discussion in their work.

Course requirements

- attendance
- participation in discussions

Course Goals

Students will become familiar with central ways of philosophising in analytic philosophy and beyond. Necessary background for understanding much of what has developed in analytic philosophy in the last century and more will be provided.

Learning Outcomes

Students will acquire good knowledge of some of the more influential contributions to the philosophy of language in recent decades, as well as acquaintance with some of the major difficulties with these contributions.

Assessment

Two-year MA students: written exam as part of the Final Examination at the end of the first year. One-year MA students: either exam as above or term paper of approximately 2500 words (students should consult me about the paper's subject).

Topics and Readings

We shall devote about one week to each of the readings 1 to 9. The remaining meetings will be devoted to the last topic.

1. Analyticity

1. Quine, Willard van Orman. Two Dogmas of Empiricism. Reprinted in his 1961. *From a Logical Point of View*. 2nd edition. Harvard University Press: 20-46.
2. Grice, Paul and Strawson, Peter 1956. In Defense of a Dogma. Rep. in Grice, Paul 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Harvard University Press: 196-212.

2. Assertion and Beyond

3. Austin, John 1962. Selections from *How to Do Things with Words*. Lectures I, II, VII from page 91 last paragraph, VIII, IX.
4. Grice, Paul 1967, 1987. Logic and Conversation, Chaps. 1-3. Rep. in his 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP.
5. Donnellan, Keith 1966. Reference and Definite Descriptions. Rep. in his 2012. *Essays on Reference, Language, and Mind*. Oxford University Press: 3-30.
6. Kripke, Saul 1977. Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference. Rep. in his 2011. *Philosophical Troubles: Collected Papers, Volume I*. Oxford University Press: 99-124.
7. Stalnaker, Robert 1978. Assertion. Rep. in his 1999. *Context and Content: Essays on Intentionality in Speech and Thought*. Oxford University Press: 78-95.

3. Varieties of Externalism

8. Kripke, Saul 1972, 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Lecture II. Oxford University Press.

9. Putnam, Hilary 1977. The Meaning of “Meaning”. Reprinted in his 1975. *Mind, Language and Reality*. Cambridge University Press: 217-71.

4. Wittgenstein: Readings from the *Philosophical Investigations*

The list above includes the required readings; I shall suggest further readings during the term.