

Philosophy of Language

Hanoch Ben-Yami

2023–24 Winter 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 main works discussed will be by Quine, Grice, Strawson, Russell, Austin, Kripke, Putnam, Donnellan, Stalnaker, Wittgenstein.

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

Written exam as part of the Final Examination at the end of the first year. Visiting students who cannot write the exam will write term paper of approximately 2500 words (students should consult Ben-Yami about the paper's subject).

Topics and Readings

We shall devote about one week to each of the readings.

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. Definite Descriptions

3. Russell, Bertrand 1905. On Denoting. *Mind* 56: 479–93.
4. Strawson, Peter 1950. On Referring. Rep. in his 1971. *Logico-Linguistic Papers*. Methuen: London: 1–27.

3. Assertion and Beyond

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

4. Varieties of Externalism

10. Kripke, Saul 1972, 1980. *Naming and Necessity*. Lecture II. Oxford University Press.
11. Putnam, Hilary 1977. The Meaning of "Meaning". Reprinted in his 1975. *Mind, Language and Reality*. Cambridge University Press: 217-71.

5. Wittgenstein: Readings from the *Philosophical Investigations*

The list above includes the required readings; further readings will be suggested during the term.