

**Philosophy of Language**  
Philosophy 328  
Fall 2009, University at Buffalo  
August 25, 2009

Instructor: David Braun  
Time and Location: MWF 1:00-1:50 pm, Norton 218  
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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00, and by appointment  
Course Website: UBLearn

Words and sentences in English and other languages have meanings. That is why speakers can use sentences to communicate their thoughts, some of which are true. But what are meanings? What are the meanings of 'Jimmy Carter', 'dog', 'red', 'waves', 'marry', and 'the'? How are meaning, reference, thought, communication, and truth related? How do words and sentences get their meanings and referents? We will begin this course by considering several theories about the nature of meaning and reference. We will then discuss communication and speech acts, the determination of word and sentence meaning, and skepticism about meaning. If time permits, we will end with applications of philosophy of language to ethics and law.

### **Prerequisites**

The only formal prerequisite is one prior philosophy course. But this is an advanced course, and I will assume knowledge of philosophical terminology, argumentation, and methodology. I will use some symbolic logic, which I will explain as fully as possible in the time we have, but you may find this course easier if you have taken Philosophy 315 (Symbolic Logic).

### **Texts and Supplies**

1. A. P. Martinich (ed.), *The Philosophy of Language*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed.
2. William Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*.
3. Readings on UBLearn
4. Four bluebooks, small size
4. *Recommended:* Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*.

Martinich, Lycan, and bluebooks can be purchased at the campus bookstore.

### **Required Work**

1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion.
2. A quiz on use and mention.
3. Two short papers, 3-5 pages, on assigned topics. **Tentative due dates:** Friday, October 2 and Friday, November 6.
4. A midterm examination. **Tentative date:** Wednesday, October 14.
5. A final examination covering the second half of the course, to be taken at a date, time, and location to be announced. **No exceptions.**

## **Grading**

I will grade each assignment on a 100-point scale. At the end of the term, I will calculate a numerical score for each student, using the weights for each assignment given below. I will use the resulting numerical scores to assign letter grades.

- |    |                     |     |
|----|---------------------|-----|
| 1. | Quiz on use/mention | 5%  |
| 2. | First short paper   | 20% |
| 3. | Second short paper  | 25% |
| 4. | Midterm exam        | 25% |
| 5. | Final exam          | 25% |

## **Examinations**

The examinations will consist of a mixture of true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and short-essay questions. Make-up exams (if any) will be long-essay exams, and will be offered only to those who have appropriate excuses and appropriate documentation.

## **Final Exam**

All students must take the final exam at the scheduled date and time. There will be **no exceptions**. You should arrange your travel plans for the end of the semester accordingly.

## **Conflicts**

Those of you who have out-of-town commitments due to membership in a college organization (e.g., sports teams) must let me know *no later than the second week of class* if you anticipate having a commitment that conflicts with an exam.

## **In-Class Announcements, E-mail Announcements, and UBLearns**

I will make various announcements in class, including reading assignments, changes to due dates for papers, and dates for the midterm and final examinations. I will also periodically e-mail announcements through UBLearns. You will be responsible for all of these announcements. Some of them will appear on the class's UBLearns site.

## **Contacting Me**

Please use e-mail to contact me: [dbraun2@buffalo.edu](mailto:dbraun2@buffalo.edu). Use your buffalo.edu e-mail account and put "Philosophy of Language" or something similar in the subject line. I am likely to delete messages from non-buffalo.edu accounts.

## **Special Needs**

If you have a disability that you think requires special accommodations (e.g., note-takers or extended time on exams), then inform me immediately and contact Disability Services, 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608, to receive documentation of your disability. You are responsible for notifying me and assuring that I receive documentation from DS *by the end of the second week of class*.

## Academic Honesty and Student Conduct

I expect you to conform to all University policies regarding academic honesty and conduct. For information about UB's policies, see the following URLs.

Academic Integrity: <http://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu/policies/index.php>

Student Conduct: <http://www.ub-judiciary.buffalo.edu/rulereg.php>

## Topics and Approximate Schedule

I will periodically make reading assignments from the following list, at **approximately** the times indicated. There may be additions or subtractions to the readings, and some topics may be omitted, depending on discussion, time, and interest. I abbreviate the names of our readings as follows: M = Martinich, L = Lycan, UBL = UBLearns, K = Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (the book). The dates given below for assignments and exams are tentative.

### 1. The Naive Theory and Millianism (Aug 31 - Sep 11)

M: Introduction, sections 1-6. Mill, "Of Names".

L: Chapter 1, pp. 1-8.

*Recommended:* UBL, Braun, "Names and Natural Kind Terms", sections 1 and 2.

**☞No Class on Monday, September 7 (Labor Day)☞**

**☞No Class on Friday, September 11 (I will be at a conference)☞**

### 2. The Idea Theory (Sep 14 - Sep 16)

M: Locke, "Of Words".

L: Chapter 6, pp. 78-80.

### 3. Frege (Sep 18 - Sep 23)

M: Frege, "On Sense & Nominatum", first eight pages, then last page.

L: Chapter 2, pp. 12-16. Chapter 5, pp. 80-87.

*Recommended:* M, Frege, the remainder of "On Sense & Nominatum". UBL, Braun, "Frege and Russell", section on Frege.

### 4. Russell (Sep 25 - Oct 2)

M: Russell, "On Denoting". Russell, "Descriptions".

UBL: Russell, "Knowledge by Acquaintance and by Description".

L: Chapter 2, pp. 13-25.

*Recommended:* UBL, Braun, "Frege and Russell", section on Russell.

**☞No Class on Monday, September 28 (Yom Kippur)☞**

**☞First Paper Due Friday, October 2☞**

### 5. Kripke, Anti-Descriptivism, and Direct Reference (Oct 5 - Oct 9)

M: Kripke, selection from "Naming and Necessity".

L: Chapter 3, all of it. Chapter 4, pp. 52-66.

UBL: Searle, "Proper Names".

*Recommended:* M, Putnam, "Meaning and Reference," pp.306-312. K, *Naming and Necessity* (all of it). UBL, Braun, "Names and Natural Kind Terms", section 3-5.

### **7. Speech Acts** (Oct 12 – Oct 16)

M: Austin, "Performative Utterances". Searle, "A Taxonomy of Illocutionary Acts", sections 1-2. Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts", first seven pages.

UBL: Bach, "Introduction". Austin, selections from *How To Do Things With Words*.

### **☞Midterm examination on Wednesday, October 14☞**

### **8. Pragmatics and Conversational Implicature** (Oct 19 – Oct 21)

M: Grice, "Logic and Conversation."

L: Chapter 13, pp. 187-204.

UBL: Bach, "Conversational Implicature".

### **9. Russell, Donnellan, and Kripke on Definite Descriptions** (Oct 23 – Oct 28)

M: Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions".

UBL: Kripke, "Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference".

L: Chapter 2, "Objections to Russell's Theory" and "Donnellan's Distinction".

### **☞Second Paper Due Friday, November 6☞**

### **10. Communicative Intentions and Meaning** (Oct 30 - Nov 2)

M: Grice, "Meaning."

L: Chapter 7, pp. 100-114.

*Recommended:* M, Lewis, "Languages and Language".

### **11. Skepticism About Meaning: Rule Following** (Nov 4 – Nov 9)

M: Kripke, "On Rules and Private Language."

### **12. Philosophy of Language and Ethics** (Nov 11 – Nov 16)

UBL: Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms". Geach, "Ascriptivism".

### **13. Philosophy of Language and the Law** (Nov 18 – Nov 23)

UBL: Soames, "Interpreting Legal Texts".

### **14. Catch Up and Review** (Nov 30 – Dec 11)

### **☞Final Examination: Date, Time, and Location To Be Announced☞**