

Professor Elisabeth Camp

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Office Hours: (most) Thursdays 1-2:30

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Course Description

In this course we will consider the speech act of assertion by comparing it to some of its cousins: 'not-at-issue' informational contributions like presuppositions and implicatures; and non-information-contributing acts like questions, imperatives, 'tests' and promises. We will focus on differences both in these various speech acts' dynamic conversational effects and in their longer-term public consequences. We'll consider whether and to what extent they are conventional, and tied to or marked by specific linguistic constructions. We will also examine the various epistemic and social norms that govern them, and how these play out socially and politically. Readings will range from classics by Austin, Searle, Strawson, Grice and Stalnaker to forthcoming articles by Yalcin, Starr and Murray, and Saul; and will include philosophers of language, linguists, epistemologists, and feminists.

Readings

The listed readings are subject to revision, especially in light of your suggestions. All readings will be posted on Sakai.

When there are multiple and/or particularly bearish readings (i.e. most weeks), I will identify excerpts by FRIDAY of the week before.

Items with a • are primary readings.

Items in **brackets** are background readings. You should REALLY be acquainted with these readings, and should DEFINITELY read them before class if you haven't ever done so.

Items in *italics* are supplementary readings. (I can't guarantee I will have read all of them, though I have ambitions to do so.)

Course Requirements

- Weekly readings; attendance; and active, sustained participation – even for auditors.
- Weekly *brief* blog posts – even for auditors.
- For 'non-research' option: a 'squib', 2,500-4,000 words plus c. 3-sentence abstract, focusing on ONE claim from an assigned reading, identifying, explaining and critically evaluating the primary argument for that claim.
- For 'research' option: a substantive paper, 5,000-8,000 words plus abstract. Students will present short talks of their papers at a mini-conference at the semester's end.

All writing should be submitted electronically, in .pdf format, via email.

Everyone – auditors and registered students – should make a brief (*max* 1 para) contribution to the week's forum on Sakai by **Tuesday afternoon**. This can be an exegetical or substantive question or a comment on someone else's comments. I will post a question on Monday to get things started.

We will be covering a lot of material in this course, and no one (including me) can be expert in all of it. Recognizing ignorance is often positively useful, for yourself and for others, and only rarely a reason for embarrassment. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy should be your go-to guide for filling in big blanks and getting your bearings.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

- W 1/18** Introduction
 [Jerry Sadock: "Speech Acts"]
 [Paul Grice: "Meaning," "Logic and Conversation"]

1. Discourse Structure and Dynamics

- W 1/25** **Essential Effects**
 • David Lewis: "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"
 • Robert Stalnaker: "Assertion"

Robert Stalnaker: "Dynamic Pragmatics, Static Semantics"
Herb Clark and Susan Brennan: "Grounding in Communication"

- W 2/1** **Discourse Structure**
 • Craige Roberts: "Information structure in discourse: Towards an integrated formal theory of pragmatics" (& Afterword)
 Andrew Kehler: "Discourse Coherence"

Craige Roberts: "Context in dynamic interpretation"
Anders Schoubye & Andreas Stokke: "What is Said?"
Joroen Groenendijk & Martin Stockhof: "Changing the Context. Dynamic Semantics and Discourse"

- W 2/8** **At-Issue and Peripheral Acts: Presupposition and Implicature**
 • Larry Horn: "Information structure and the landscape of (not-)at-issue meaning"
 Mandy Simons, Judith Tonhauser, David Beaver, and Craige Roberts: "What projects and why"

Richmond Thomason: "Accommodation, Meaning, and Implicature: Interdisciplinary Foundations for Pragmatics"
Márta Abrusán: "Presupposition cancellation: explaining the 'soft-hard' trigger distinction"

- W 2/15** **Other Forces: Questions and Imperatives**
 • Craige Roberts: "Speech Acts in Discourse Context"
 Paul Portner: "Imperatives and Modals"

Barbara Partee: "Semantics and Pragmatics of Questions" (handout)
Paul Portner: "The Semantics of Imperatives within a Theory of Clause Types" (SALT04)

- W 2/22** **NO CLASS**

- W 3/1** **Other Forces: Attitudes and Tests**
 • Chris Potts: "The Expressive Dimension"
 • Malte Willer: "An Update on Epistemic Modals"

Elisabeth Camp: "Slurs as Dual-Act Expressions"
Manuel Garcia-Carpintero: "Contexts as Shared Commitments"

2. Force and Mood

W 3/8

Intentions and Conventions

[John Austin: "Performative Utterances"]

[John Searle: "A Taxonomy of Speech Acts"]

[Peter Strawson: "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts"]

[Paul Grice: "Meaning Revisited"]

- Daniel Harris: "We Talk to People, Not to Contexts"
- Seth Yalcin: "Expressivism by Force"

Herb Clark and Thomas Carlson: "Hearers and speech acts"

Mitchell Green: "Speech Acts, the Handicap Principle and the Expression of Psychological States"

W 3/15

SPRING BREAK

W 3/22

Commitments and Publicity

Robert Brandom: "Asserting"

- John MacFarlane: "What Is Assertion?"

Mark Lance and Rebecca Kukla: "'Leave the Gun; Take the Cannoli': The Pragmatic Topography of Second-Person Calls"

W 3/29

Force and Mood

[Donald Davidson: "Moods and Performances"]

Will Starr: "Mood, Force & Truth"

- Sarah Murray & Will Starr: "The Structure of Communicative Acts"

Max Kölbel: "Literal Force: a Defence of Conventional Assertion"

W 4/5

Indirect Acts

[John Searle: "Indirect Speech Acts"]

[Jerry Sadock: "Speech Act Idioms"]

- Nick Asher and Alex Lascarides: "Indirect Speech Acts"
- Chung-Hye Han: "Deriving the interpretation of rhetorical questions"

Elisabeth Camp: "Why Metaphors Make Good Insults"

Herb Clark: "Responding to Indirect Speech Acts"; "Wordless questions, wordless answers"

James Morgan: "Two Types of Convention in Indirect Speech Acts"

3. Norms of Assertion

W 4/12

Epistemic Norms

Timothy Williamson: "Assertion" (*Knowledge & Its Limits*, ch. 11)

- Jennifer Lackey: "Norms of Assertion"

Sanford Goldberg: "What is Assertion? In defense of the norm-based account"

Bernhard Nickel: "Is Brandom a Dynamic Semanticist?"

Michael Rescorla: "Assertion and Its Constitutive Norms"

W 4/19

Testimony, Lies, Bald-Faced Lies, and Bullshit

- Andreas Stokke: "Lying and Asserting"
- Andreas Stokke: "Lying and Misleading in Discourse"
- Richard Moran: "Getting Told and Being Believed"

Matthew Benton: "Lying, Belief and Knowledge"

Jennifer Saul: "Just Go Ahead and Lie"

Harry Frankfurt: "On Bullshit"

Larry Horn: "What lies beyond: Untangling the web"

W 4/26

Sociopolitics of Assertion and Response

[Miranda Fricker: *Epistemic Injustice*: "Testimonial Injustice"; "Hermeneutical Injustice"]

[Jennifer Hornsby: "Disempowered Speech"]

- Rebecca Kukla: "Performative Force, Convention, and Discursive Injustice"
- Rae Langton: "Blocking as Counterspeech"

Janice Nadler and J.D. Trout: "The Language of Consent in Police Encounters"

Laura Beth Nielsen: "Power in Public: Reactions, Responses, and Resistance to Offensive Public Speech"

Jennifer Saul: "Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation and Philosophy of Language"

Ishani Maitra: "Subordinating Speech"

Elisabeth Camp: "Insinuation, Common Ground, and the Conversational Record"

W 5/3

Mini-Conference