

**Professor Elisabeth Camp**

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*Office Hours:* Wednesdays 12:30 to 1:30, and by appointment over Zoom

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*Course meeting:* Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00 to 3:20 PM, 207 Scott Hall

*Course website:* [rutgers.instructure.com/courses/161903](https://rutgers.instructure.com/courses/161903)

*Texts:* All readings for the course are available under the relevant modules on Canvas.

**Course Description**

In this class, we will investigate how speakers use language to communicate. What goals do people accomplish by speaking? What resources does a language offer for achieving those goals? How do speakers deploy those linguistic resources to achieve their communicative goals on particular occasions?

Most philosophers and linguists have focused on the speech act of assertion: presenting a sentence as true in order to contribute information to a common pool of knowledge. What other kinds of speech acts are there: questions? orders and promises? expletives? What difference does it make when speakers contribute information without presenting a true sentence, for instance with hints, jokes, or metaphor? When hearers reject a speaker's goals, what are their resources for resisting the speaker's utterance?

Readings will be drawn from philosophy and linguistics, and range from the abstractly theoretical to the applied. Assessment will be based on participation in class and weekly online discussions, two short (2-3 pp.) papers and one longer (5-7 pp.) paper.

**Course Goals**

In this course, you will learn to:

- distinguish representational, directive, and expressive communicative functions.
- distinguish syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic aspects of communicative meaning.
- identify distinctive normative consequences of explicit and implicit speech.
- identify key ways that speakers use and abuse language to enact relations of social power.

In pursuing these course-specific goals, you will also develop these more general philosophical abilities:

- critically evaluate ideas and arguments.
- construct coherent arguments in support of your own views.
- present views that differ from your own in an accurate and fair way.
- write clearly and in an organized manner.

**Course Requirements**

- Class attendance & participation (15% of course grade).
- Weekly forum posts on Canvas (30% of course grade).
- Two short (2-3 page) writing assignments (15% each of course grade).
- A final paper, 5-7 pages (25% of course grade).
- There is NO final exam.

Grades will be assigned using the following scale:

100 ≥ **A** ≥ 90 > **B+** ≥ 85 > **B** ≥ 80 > **C+** ≥ 75 > **C** ≥ 70 > **D** ≥ 60 > **F** ≥ 0

### **Attendance**

This course is a collaborative investigation of a series of questions, rather than the transmission of a set of facts or the critique of a set of claims. Thus, the class depends on your active, collaborative participation. This means you need to do the assigned reading actively and in advance; show up to class consistently and on time; pay attention to the class (not your phone!); and engage in a substantive and respectful way with your peers.

You may miss **3 classes** over the course of the semester without providing justification or incurring a penalty. (Don't come to class sick! Wear a mask when appropriate for yourself and/or others!) If you need to miss a class, use the University absence reporting website: [sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/](https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/). Let me know by email if you need a religious or other accommodation to miss a class. Contact the Dean of Students at [deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu](mailto:deanofstudents@echo.rutgers.edu) if you are facing circumstances that necessitate an extended absence.

### **Participation**

A productive intellectual community depends on employing good practices for inclusive discussion. Our department's norms for discourse are here: [philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/civil-discourse](https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/climate-v2/civil-discourse). We will establish more specific in-class policies (e.g. about electronics) together on the first day of class.

Your in-class participation will be graded according to the following rubric.

A+	A	B	C	D	F
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• actively supports, engages and listens to peers</li><li>• arrives fully prepared at every session</li><li>• plays an active role in discussions</li><li>• comments consistently advance the level and depth of analysis</li><li>• contributions consistently improve the group dynamic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• actively supports, engages and listens to peers</li><li>• arrives fully prepared at nearly every session</li><li>• plays an active role in discussions</li><li>• comments typically advance the level and depth of analysis</li><li>• contributions often improve the group dynamic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• makes a sincere effort to interact with peers</li><li>• arrives mostly prepared at most sessions</li><li>• participates constructively in discussions</li><li>• makes relevant comments based on the assigned material</li><li>• contributions often improve (and never harm) the group dynamic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• limited interaction with peers</li><li>• preparation is inconsistent</li><li>• when prepared, participates constructively in discussions</li><li>• when prepared, makes relevant comments based on the assigned material</li><li>• contributions don't affect the group dynamic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• virtually no interaction with peers</li><li>• rarely prepared</li><li>• rarely participates</li><li>• comments are generally vague or ungrounded in the assigned material</li><li>• often displays lack of interest</li><li>• contributions often harm the group dynamic</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• no interaction with peers</li><li>• never prepared</li><li>• never participates</li><li>• demonstrates a noticeable lack of interest in the material</li><li>• contributions often significantly harm the group dynamic</li></ul>

### Forum posts

- Twice each week, by **Sunday** and **Tuesday** at **noon**, everyone will post **one short paragraph** to the week's Canvas forum, *posing a question* for discussion. To do that, you need to:
    - a) *do the reading*, guided by my brief introduction;
    - b) *ground* your question in a specific passage of the assigned text;
    - c) *motivate* your question. It is especially helpful to contextualize your question by connecting it to a question posted by one of your peers on the forum.
- By 10 AM on the day of class, you need to **like** one of the forum posts for that day.

There is **no credit** for late posts. You can **miss or drop 5 posts** over the course of the semester without penalty. Your posts will be graded according to the following rubric.

5	4	3	2	1	0
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates deep, genuine engagement with assigned reading.</li><li>• promotes focused, substantive, productive discussion.</li><li>• is substantively grounded in specific passage(s).</li><li>• demonstrates nuanced understanding of wider textual and philosophical context.</li><li>• written in a way that is clear, concise, and accessible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates serious, sincere engagement with assigned reading.</li><li>• promotes substantive, productive discussion.</li><li>• is concretely grounded in specific passage(s).</li><li>• demonstrates substantive understanding of wider textual and philosophical context.</li><li>• written in a way that is mostly clear, concise, and accessible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates sincere engagement with assigned reading.</li><li>• promotes substantive discussion.</li><li>• is anchored in specific passage(s).</li><li>• demonstrates substantive engagement with wider textual and philosophical context.</li><li>• written in a way that is somewhat clear, concise, and accessible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• narrow or superficial engagement with assigned reading.</li><li>• provokes discussion without clear payoff.</li><li>• only indirectly connected to specific passages.</li><li>• narrow or superficial engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.</li><li>• written in a way that is imprecise or difficult to understand.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• only superficial engagement with assigned reading.</li><li>• does not promote relevant discussion.</li><li>• only tangentially connected to specific passages.</li><li>• little or no engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.</li><li>• written in a way that is imprecise or difficult to understand.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demonstrates no acquaintance with assigned reading.</li><li>• distracts from productive discussion.</li><li>• not connected to specific passages.</li><li>• no engagement with wider textual and intellectual context.</li><li>• written in an inaccessible way.</li></ul>

### Writing Assignments

The two **short papers** will be short, highly structured argument reconstructions. The third will ask you to articulate your own view about an issue from the course, drawing on assigned texts to construct a conversation. Papers should be submitted **blind** (i.e. with your SID but not your name) and submitted as .pdfs through Canvas **before the start of class** on the due date. In general, extensions must be granted well before the due date; **late papers** will be assessed a penalty of 2 points per day. Rubrics for each paper will be distributed along with the topic.

### **Academic Honesty**

Rutgers University, the philosophy department, and I take academic dishonesty seriously. By enrolling in this course, you assume responsibility for familiarizing yourself with the Academic Integrity Policy and the possible penalties (including suspension and expulsion) for violating the policy: <http://nbacademicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>. As per the policy, all suspected violations will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct.

Use of AI such as ChatGPT is only permitted to help you brainstorm ideas and see examples. All material you submit must be your own. Assessment will be based on evidence that you have actually understood and engaged critically with the relevant issues, texts, and claims. In particular, be aware that although the writing produced by ChatGPT is often superficially plausible, it is rarely insightful and sometimes goes wildly awry.

### **Resources**

One of my sayings: Being a person is hard! But it's one of your jobs. You have a responsibility to take care of yourself.

I can be more helpful in making accommodations in light of life's complexities if you are proactive in telling me about them and demonstrate that you are addressing them in a responsible way.

Links to many resources for success are compiled here: [success.rutgers.edu/](https://success.rutgers.edu/).

If you need accommodations because of a disability, please have the Office of Disability Services ([ods.rutgers.edu](https://ods.rutgers.edu)) contact me.

If you are struggling with **mental health**, or just need some extra guidance, contact CAPS ([health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/](https://health.rutgers.edu/medical-counseling-services/counseling/), (848) 932-7884) or some other source of support.

If you are struggling with **academic responsibilities** – e.g. juggling assignments, studying or writing effectively – contact Student Support Services ([rutgers.edu/academics/student-support](https://rutgers.edu/academics/student-support)) or the Learning Centers ([learningcenters.rutgers.edu](https://learningcenters.rutgers.edu)). The Learning Centers offer tutoring and support writing, task management, and presentation skills; they also host workshops and provide individual academic coaching.

Incidences of **bias** can be reported at <https://studentaffairs.rutgers.edu/bias-incident-reporting>.

If you're feeling disoriented about **philosophy**, the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy ([plato.stanford.edu](https://plato.stanford.edu)) should be your go-to guide for exploring specific topics. It can be a bit overwhelming; for a quick introduction, the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy is often useful: <https://iep.utm.edu/>.

## **Schedule of Readings** (a rough, optimistic guide; updates will be posted on Canvas)

- 1/17 Introduction  
David Concepcion: "How to Read Philosophy"

### **Assertion and Other Speech Acts**

- 1/22 J.L. Austin: "Performative Utterances"  
1/24 Charles Stevenson: *Ethics and Language*, ch. 3 & 4  
  
1/29 David Lewis: "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"  
1/31 Rae Langton & Caroline West: "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game"  
  
2/5 Robert Brandom: "Asserting"  
**First paper topics handed out**  
2/7 Judith Butler: "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution"  
  
2/12 Quill Kukla & Mark Lance: "Telling Gender: The Pragmatics and Ethics of Gender Ascriptions"  
**FIRST PAPER DUE**

### **Syntax, Semantics and Pragmatics**

- 2/14 Paul Grice: "Meaning"  
  
2/19 Noam Chomsky: *Syntactic Structures*, chs. 1-4  
2/21 Richard Larson & Gabriel Segal: "The Nature of Semantic Theory"  
  
2/26 John Searle: "A Taxonomy of Speech Acts"  
2/28 Craige Roberts: "Speech Acts in Discourse Context" (§12.3 is optional)

### **Indirection and Non-Literality**

- 3/4 Paul Grice: "Logic and Conversation"  
3/6 Herb Clark: "Responding to Indirect Speech Acts"

### **3/11-15: SPRING BREAK**

- 3/18 Elisabeth Camp: "Insinuation, Conversation, and the Common Ground"  
**Second paper topics handed out**  
3/20 Donald Davidson: "What Metaphors Mean"  
  
3/25 Dan Sperber and Deidre Wilson: "Irony and the Use-Mention Distinction"

### **Abuse and Resistance**

- 3/27 Harry Frankfurt: "On Bullshit"  
**SECOND PAPER DUE**  
  
4/1 Quill Kukla: "Performative Force, Convention, and Discursive Injustice"  
4/3 Jessica Keiser: "The 'All Lives Matter' Response: QUD-Shifting as Epistemic Injustice"  
  
4/8 Carlos Santana: "What's Wrong with Dogwhistles"  
4/10 Luvel Anderson: "Resistance and Reclamation: Notorious Thugs"

4/15 Lynne Tirrell: "Genocidal Language Games"

4/17 Rae Langton: "Blocking as Counterspeech"

4/22 Laura Caponetto & Bianca Cepollaro: "Bending as Counterspeech"

**Final paper topics handed out**

4/24 Penelope Eckert: "Social Indexicality, Variation, And The Cline Of Interiority"

4/29 Review and wrap-up

**Friday May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5 PM: FINAL PAPER DUE**