

University of Miami | Semester Year

COURSE CODE

Philosophy of Language (Introduction)

Day Time | Classroom

INSTRUCTOR:

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Office | Office Hours

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of language. Philosophy of language concerns a large number of topics, including meaning, truth, content, reference, the syntax and semantics of various linguistic constructions, the nature and role of presupposition in communicative interchange, speech acts, figurative uses of language, the epistemology of language understanding and language learning, and so on. Here we'll focus on some topics that central to philosophy of language, and that have far-reaching consequences for other topics in philosophy of language and other areas of philosophy. We will learn about different expressions we have talk about objects in the world (names, descriptions, indexicals like 'this' or 'that'), about the meaning of these and more complex expressions, like sentences. We will also touch on how we use sentences to communicate information beyond the meaning of sentences – for instance, a common way to politely decline an invitation to a party it to say 'I have to work tonight'; this sentence does not literally mean that I will not go to the party, so how does it convey such a piece of information? Time permitting, we will discuss how issues in philosophy of language relates to issues in law.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	STUDENT OUTCOMES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage critically with selected important debates, positions, and methods in Western philosophy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain debates and positions clearly and precisely in written and oral form. • Construct thought experiments and arguments against hypotheses presented in class.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand basic concepts and distinctions in the readings and theories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply theories and concepts in new contexts. • Use introduced concepts and distinctions in your own arguments.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop original ideas on selected topics in philosophy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically engage with positions and arguments put forth in readings. • Write and present clear, precise, and moderately original argument on self-chosen topic.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 20% Reading Assignments
- 25% Midterm Take Home Exam
- 20% Presentation
- 25% Final Take Home Exam
- 10% Participation

Reading Assignments

Reading Assignments will be graded based on student engagement with the readings on Perusall. For full credit, you must annotate throughout the entire reading, and respond to at least one other student's annotation, question, or comment in readings of at least **10 weeks**, each worth 2 points. You are expected to engage with the required readings in sufficient detail for annotating, commenting, and critical discussion, and be conversant with the material so that discussion is substantive and lively. Annotations, questions, or comments should be done by **the day before** the reading is scheduled at **11:59pm** to count towards your grade.

Midterm Take Home Exam

Midterm Take Home Exam is in long essay format, with two or three questions. The questions will be posted online at the end of week 6, and it is due on week 7, DATE/TIME. You will have **one** week to complete this assignment.

Presentation

Throughout the course, we will have several in class individual and group activities, some of which will involve giving short in-class presentations and submitting a written report (4–5 pages). Students are expected to give at least **one** but no more than two presentations. For full credit, students have to (1) submit a written report (4–5 pages), (2) give at least **one** in class presentation, and (3) ask questions in other presentations.

Final Take Home Exam

Final Take Home Exam is cumulative and in short essay format. The questions will be posted online on the last day of classes, and it is due on DATE/TIME. You will have **4** days to complete this assignment.

Participation

Participation grade will be based on student's engagement in lecture and participation on in class activities throughout the course. Attendance will be taken but do not expect a perfect grade merely for being an organic body.

NOTE: Things change – the Fates are fickle. Consequently, information found on this syllabus is subject to revision as we progress through the semester: Readings and content may be added (or cut) depending on our rate of progress, and it may be necessary to amend the due date of the assignments. Revisions will be announced in lecture and posted online. It is each student's responsibility to keep informed of any changes.

MATERIALS

- William G. Lycan *Philosophy of Language: A contemporary Introduction*, Routledge, 3rd edition, 2019.
- Additional readings may be added through the semester.
- All readings will be available on Perusall.

Students are expected to have done the readings *before* lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

WEEK 1: Introduction

- Arguments.
- Thought Experiments: “AITA, that if Jurassic Park were real, I would tell my husband that he cannot go.” https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/.
- Chapter 1: Introduction: meaning and reference
- John Stuart Mill, *The System of Logic*, chap 2 (excerpts).

WEEK 2

- Chapter 2: Definite Descriptions

WEEK 3

- Chapter 3: Proper Names: the Description Theory
- Selected letters from Frege-Russell correspondence.

WEEK 4

- Chapter 4: Proper Names: Direct Reference and the Causal-Historical Theory

WEEK 5

- Chapter 5: Traditional Theory of Meanings.
- King,J., Soames,S. & and Speaks,J. *New Thinking about Propositions*, Chapter 1: What Role do Propositions Play in our Theories?

WEEK 6

- Chapter 6: “Use” Theories

WEEK 7

- Chapter 7: Psychological theories: Grice’s program

WEEK 8

- Chapter 8: Verificationism

WEEK 9

- Chapter 9: Truth-Condition Theories: Davidson's program

WEEK 10

- Chapter 10: Truth-Condition Theories: possible worlds and intensional semantics

WEEK 11

- Chapter 11: Semantic pragmatics
- Barbara Partee, "Binding Implicit Variables in Quantified Contexts".

WEEK 12

- Chapter 12: Speech acts and illocutionary force
- Marcin Matczak "Three kinds of intention in lawmaking"

WEEK 13

- Chapter 13: Implicative relations

WEEK 14

- Chapter 14: Metaphor
- Robin Jeshion "Slurs and Stereotypes".

GRADING

The usual grading scale will apply: 0-59% F, 60-62% D-, 63-66% D, 67-69% D+, 70-72% C-, 73-76% C, 77-79% C+, 80-82% B-, 83-86% B, 87-89% B+, 90-92% A-, 93-96% A, 97-100% A+.

Paper and exams will be graded based on the following **six** evaluation criteria:

Bare minimum: is the paper prompt or question addressed at all?

Clarity: Are the explanations of technical terms and arguments clear, understandable, and accessible to someone who is not taking the class?

Correctness: Are the explanations of technical terms, theories and arguments correct? Are the theories and arguments ascribed to the right philosophers?

Originality: Are there original cases, objections, or replies?

Relevance: Are there theses, cases, arguments, or any other information that are irrelevant to address the prompt? Is the paper lacking explanation of a relevant theory, thesis, case, or argument?

Structure: Does the paper have a clear structure, with introduction and conclusion? Are the theses, cases, and arguments presented in an organized way?

NOTE: While there is no evaluation criterion for grammar or typos, they may affect the grade if they are severe enough to compromise understanding. So, before submitting your paper or take home exam, make sure to ask a friend to proof read besides proof reading the paper yourself. Also take note of campus resources listed below that offer assistance with essay-writing.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take academic dishonesty in any form very seriously: I will prosecute any offenses, seeking penalties ranging up to and including expulsion from the university. The university's Academic guide to Integrity is available online: <http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/PDF/academicintegflyer.pdf>. It is every student's responsibility to be familiar with the university's policies. If you see anything there that you don't understand please contact me.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

If you are facing a major medical or another major difficulty that is keeping you from doing well in the class, contact me as soon as you can. I am happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But I can't help if you don't let me know about your circumstances as soon as they arise.

**** Please, don't wait until after the final exam to let me know about your circumstances. At that point there is virtually nothing we can do to accommodate you.****

1) CAPS (Counseling & Psychological Services)

If you're dealing with depression, anxiety, or are just feeling overwhelmed, CAPS is available to help. They offer individual and group counseling, as well as relaxation

rooms and other resources to make the quarter more bearable.

- tel: (805) 893-4411
- <http://counseling.sa.ucsb.edu>

2) **CARE** (*Campus Advocacy Resources & Education*)

CARE provides resources related to sexual assault, stalking, and intimate partner violence. They offer free and confidential counseling, medical and legal assistance, and help with referrals for long-term support for those who need it.

- tel: (805) 893-4613
- <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/Care>

3) **RCSGD** (*Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity*)

The RCSGD provides resources for gender, sexual, romantic minorities such as: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, intersex, and otherwise gender/sexual/romantic nonconforming individuals.

They also collect reports of hate incidents and maintain a list of gender neutral bathrooms on campus.

- tel: (805) 893-5847
- <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/sgd/>

4) **CLAS** (*Campus Learning Assistance Services*)

CLAS offers workshops on study skills like note-taking and time management; group tutorials on math, science, and economics; assistance with essay-writing, and other free services that will help you perform well in your classes.

- <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu>

5) **DSP** (*Disabled Students Program*)

If you have any sort of disability - physical or mental, permanent or temporary – we strongly encourage you to register with DSP. They can then notify your instructors if you need certain accommodations during classes or during tests.

A disability can be something like difficulty seeing or hearing; difficulty attending class due to physical or emotional distress; chronic anxiety or depression; or anything else that interferes with your schoolwork.

There's no shame in seeking help for these sorts of things, but unfortunately UCSB requires that instructors receive confirmation from DSP before providing accommodation. Since DSP is often busy, contact them as soon as possible if you need or expect to need their support.

- tel: (805) 893-2668
- <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>