

Part 1b, Paper 2 Logic | Michaelmas 2016

Theories of Meaning

Lecturer: Dr Maarten Steenhagen

Course description This course will discuss four key moments twentieth century philosophy of language and logic. It will cover the Part 1b syllabus materials on Theories of Meaning for the paper in Logic. Feel free to contact me at ms2416@cam.ac.uk if you have any suggestions, questions, or comments about this course.

General reading An good and comprehensive textbook is: Alexander Miller (2007), *Philosophy of Language* (2nd ed.), London: Routledge.

Online resources Outlines and handouts will be made available on: <http://mstenhagen.github.io/teaching/2016tom/>

Where and when Wednesday 3-4. Lecture Block Room 5

Lecture 1: Meaning and Verification

This lecture will consider the relation between the meaning of a sentence and its conditions of verification by discussing early twentieth-century empiricism about meaning.

Suggested Reading A.J. Ayer (1946), *Language, Truth and Logic* (2nd ed.), London: Gollancz, Introduction & ch. 1.

Lecture 2: The Dogmas of Empiricism

This lecture will discuss criticisms of meaning empiricism. In particular, we will look at the arguments put forward by Quine.

Suggested Reading W.V.O. Quine (1951), 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism,' *Philosophical Review* (60), 20-43. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2181906>.

Lecture 3: Compositional Semantics

This lecture will consider the relation between the meaning of a sentence and the meaning of its parts by unpacking Davidson's arguments about the learnability of language.

Suggested Reading Donald Davidson (1984) *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, ch. 1 ('Theories of meaning and learnable languages'). Available online at: <http://doi.org/10.1093/0199246297.003.0001>.

Lecture 4: Pragmatics

This lecture will look at 'non-compositional' theories of meaning by considering the relation between the meaning of a sentence and the context of its utterance.

Suggested Reading Charles Travis (1997), 'Pragmatics,' in *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, B. Hale and C. Wright (eds.), Oxford: Blackwell, 87-107.
