

PHL390 H5S: Special Topics in Philosophy: Frege's Puzzle (Online)

July–August 2020

Meetings: See “Contact” below

Instructor: Rory Harder

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Course Description

Frege’s puzzle was originally about how two identity sentences, “ $a=a$ ” and “ $a=b$ ”, could differ in significance when the names “ a ” and “ b ” refer to the same object. For instance, why is “Clark Kent is Clark Kent” a triviality, while determining the truth of “Clark Kent is Superman” potentially surprising? Frege responded to this puzzle by arguing that names have as their meanings not objects, but ways of thinking of objects. Russell, however, held on to the view that names simply have objects as their meanings. The topic of this course is ways that the traditional Fregean and Russellian views have been elaborated over the past century in relation to various reflexes of Frege’s puzzle that arise within language, thought, and communication.

Contact

For each lecture, I will upload a video of me working through a handout that will help understand the readings for that lecture. The only exceptions are the very first and last lecture, which will be interactive lectures at specific times that you must attend.

Each week I will host a couple hours of interactive office hours in which you can discuss the ideas in the readings and lectures with me and your fellow classmates. Please come to these prepared with specific questions or comments about course material.

While you should absolutely e-mail about important matters, I will ignore any e-mails with questions that are easily answered by this syllabus or on Quercus. It is your responsibility to keep informed about such matters. Furthermore, I will ignore any e-mails that ask questions about course content. These questions must be raised within office hours.

Learning Objectives

Aside from mastery of arguments and positions in cutting-edge controversies in philosophy, the primary things you will gain from this course are the following general skills:

- how to draw out complex arguments and positions from difficult texts;
- how to evaluate complex arguments and positions;
- how to write clearly and concisely;

The assignments and lectures will be geared towards developing those skills, which will help you in your future philosophy courses and life in general.

Course Materials

All readings will be made available through Quercus.

Course Requirements

1. Weekly argument analyses (500 words each): 10% each. For the first four full weeks of the last class, you must submit an argument analysis at the end of the week. Detailed instructions for completing these will be uploaded to the course webpage.
2. One long paper (2500 words): 50%. You must schedule a one-on-one online meeting with me before the last class, in which you will get a topic approved. You must come to this meeting prepared with a couple topic proposals.
3. Attendance and Participation: 10%. You must attend the very first and very last lecture. You must also attend an office hour on at least 3 weeks, and ask a question or make a comment in each one you attend.

Reading List

Part 1: Background

July 2: Course Introduction

Mandatory Interactive Lecture from 3–6pm

Reading: Frege, “On Sense and Reference”; Frege, “The Thought”

Optional: Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, Chapter 1

July 7: Russellianism

Reading: Russell, “On Denoting”; Russell, *Problems of Philosophy*, Chapter 5

Optional: Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, Chapter 2

July 9: Direct Reference Theory

Reading: Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 2; Kripke, “A Puzzle about Belief”

Optional: Evans, *The Varieties of Reference*, Chapter 3

First Argument Analysis Due

Part 2: Frege’s Puzzle in Language and Thought

July 14: Why Fregeanism?

Reading: Campbell, “Is Sense Transparent?”

July 16: Defending Direct Reference I

Reading: Perry, “Frege on Demonstratives”

Optional: Evans, “Understanding Demonstratives”

Second Argument Analysis Due

July 21: Defending Direct Reference II

Reading: Fodor, *A Theory of Content and Other Essays*, Chapter 6

Optional: Fodor, “Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology”; Fodor, *Psychosemantics*, Chapter 1

July 23: Naturalism

Reading: Millikan, “Images in Identity”

Third Argument Analysis Due

Part 3: Frege’s Puzzle in Communication

July 28: Loar Cases

Reading: Heck, “The Sense of Communication”; Bezuidenhout, “The Communication of De Re Thoughts”

July 30: What is Sense?

Reading: Dickie & Rattan, “Sense, Communication, and Rational Engagement”

Optional: Heck, “Do Demonstratives have Senses?”

Fourth Argument Analysis Due

Part 4: Relationism

August 4: Semantic Relationism

Reading: Fine, *Semantic Relationism*, Chapter 2

Optional: Gray, “Relational Approaches to Frege’s Puzzle”

August 6: Formal Relationism

Reading: Heck, “Solving Frege’s Puzzle”

August 11: Concluding

Mandatory Interactive Lecture from 3–6pm

Reading: TBD

Long Paper Due

Other Information

Accessibility: I will only make accommodations (e.g. extensions) if you provide me with appropriate documentation, or that are requested of me through accessibility services or your college registrar. I will do my best to accommodate any disabilities. Here are two links that may help if you need support with the class: <http://www.artsci.utoronto.ca/current/advising/ell> and <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/feeling-distressed>.

Late and Regrade Policy: One half of a letter grade (5%) subtracted per day late. Grade of 0 if more than seven days late. I will only regrade an assignment if contacted within two weeks of when the assignment was first graded and returned to you, and you must provide a reason for wanting a regrade. All regrade requests must be made in writing and you must acknowledge that your new mark may be less than the original one.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct: The University of Toronto takes plagiarism (and academic misconduct in general) very seriously. For a complete statement of the policies governing academic conduct, see the University’s *Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters*. You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is, and also for knowing the particular plagiarism penalties.

Quercus Use: You are expected to check the course webpage page regularly to access the readings and check for updates.

Assignment Submission: You must e-mail me your essays at the e-mail listed above.