Philosophy 134: Philosophy of Language

Autumn 2013
TuTh 2:00-3:20pm
Warren Lecture Hall 2114

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Office hours: Tu10-11:30 in H&SS 8072.

Overview

This course is an introduction to the philosophy of language. Philosophy of language concerns quite 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, questions about the ontology of languages, the epistemology of language understanding and language learning, the mental/psychological basis of linguistic understanding and use, and so on. Since we can't possibly study all of these topics, we'll focus our energy on topics that are most central in recent philosophical work on language, and that have far-reaching consequences for other topics in philosophy of language and other areas of philosophy.

In particular, we'll be concentrating on philosophical attempts to understand reference and meaning.

Course Requirements

Those taking the class for credit are expected to hand in three short (5-7) page papers. There will be one assignment corresponding to each of our four course segments. Only the final paper is mandatory for everyone, since it is your final exam (see below). Apart from that one, you'll be asked to write two of the other three papers (your choice which two). Putting it all together, then, you'll write three papers for the course. I'll hand out a list of topics for the papers before each is due. Grades will be determined on the basis of the three papers, and I'll use class participation as a way of deciding borderline cases.

As remarked above, the paper corresponding to the fourth segment will count as your final exam: it will be due on 12 December 2013 at 6:00pm (this is the officially assigned day and time of exam week), so that you'll have plenty of time after the end of official course instruction to complete it.

There will be no midterm for the course.

Academic Integrity

Violations of academic integrity will not be tolerated in this course; violators will receive an F on at least the relevant assignment and possibly the course, and will be subjected to UCSD's disciplinary procedures (which could result in penalties including permanent explusion from the university).

You are responsible for knowing and adhering to the <u>UCSD Policy on Integrity</u> in all respects. In particular, you may not cause or allow your work for this course to resemble that of any other person, and all use of the ideas or words of anyone other than a paper's author must be acknowledged properly. I don't care a huge amount about specific citation formats; I do care a huge amount that sources are acknowledged. As far as collaboration goes, it's fine (it's encouraged) to talk about the philosophical issues with other students or anyone else you like; but when it is time to write up an essay you should do so entirely by yourself. If you have any questions about the Policy on Integrity or how to follow it (e.g., if you are unsure how to cite ideas from other sources) *please ask me!* I am very happy to help prevent real or apparent violations of academic integrity before they occur, and very unhappy to discover that they have occured. (As you may have noticed, I feel very strongly about this issue.)

To ensure standards of academic integrity are met, I'll ask you, as a condition on taking this course, to run all of your assigned work for the course through <u>Turnitin.com</u>, which checks your paper for textual similarity to all of the other papers in its databases. (Your submitted papers will also be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism, going forward.)

To get started with the system, please see the instructions at <u>http://turnitin.com/resources/documentation/turnitin/training/en_us/Student_Manual_en_us.pdf</u>. You'll need the class name (Philosophy of Language, Autumn 2013) class ID (6936682) and the password (meaning).

Reading Materials

I have put all of the readings for the course on <u>electronic reserve</u> at Giesel Library; you'll need the password (jc134) to access the materials. Most but not all of them are also printed in Peter Ludlow's *Readings in the Philosophy of Language* (MIT Press, 1997), in case you'd like to have them in one convenient printed volume.

Tentative Schedule

This schedule is tentative in both its content and its timing; I reserve the right to add, subtract, or reschedule items as the course progresses.

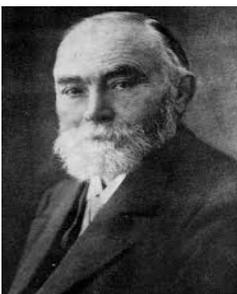### Segment 1 (weeks 1-3): Quine and Logical Empiricism
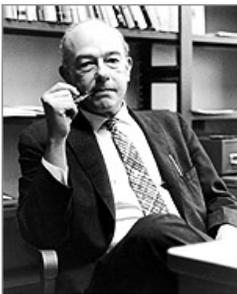
Hempel, "Empiricist Criteria of Cognitive Significance: Problems and Changes"
Quine, <u>"Two Dogmas of Empiricism"</u>
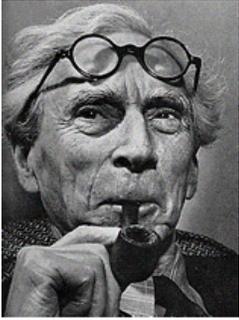Grice and Strawson, <u>"In Defense of a Dogma"</u>
Carnap, <u>"Quine on Analyticity"</u>

Segment 2 (weeks 4-6): Frege on Sense and Reference

Frege, "On Sense and Reference"
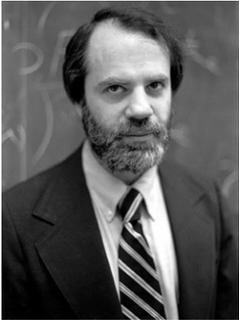Frege, "The Thought"

Segment 3 (weeks 7-8): Definite Descriptions

Russell, "On Denoting"
Russell, "Descriptions"
Strawson, "On Referring"
Donellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"
Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"

Segment 4 (weeks 9-10): Causal and Description Theories of Reference

Searle, "Proper Names"
Kripke, "Naming and Necessity"

Advice

Writing philosophy is difficult, and doing it well takes time and practice. As this is an upper level philosophy course, I assume you've had some practice already, and you're about to get yet more of it in this course. In addition, you may find it useful to consult some of Jim Pryor's excellent tips on philosophical writing. Obviously, these materials are not designed for our writing assignments in particular, but the advice given is generally sound and applicable.

I can't emphasize enough the importance of starting your writing early. The process of writing -- even if only starting with a half-baked idea -- will help you crystalize your thoughts and get clear on what you do and don't understand. That, in turn, will tell you what you need to do next to refine your ideas. Also, starting early allows you the (necessary) luxury of setting out, reconsidering, revising, and developing lines of thought.

And if there's something in the course that you don't understand, *come see me about it*. Getting the issue cleared up sooner rather than later means that it won't create other problems for you, and will allow you more time to enjoy the warm glow of understanding. This is why God invented office hours. You've paid your tuition, so don't let material go over your head; come and get the education you deserve.