

Knowledge, action, and communication: From philosophy to cognitive science
Research Master in Cognitive Science and Humanities: Language, Communication and
Organization

Number of credits: 6
1st semester. Mandatory

Skills/Competence Acquired by Students.

By the end of the class students should be able to:

- ✧ Understand notions such as: speaker meaning, literal/non-literal meaning, pragmatic competence, conversational cooperation and interpretation, pragmatic and conventional implicatures, relevance, presuppositions, the pragmatics/semantics distinction, implicit vs. explicit, *a priori* / *a posteriori* knowledge, know-that and know-how, intention, belief, desire, etc.
- ✧ Communication skills: through essays writing and the feedback students will get on them students will further develop the capacity to present problems and propose solutions to them in a clear, precise and concise way. Through discussions students will also have the opportunity to develop the capacity to speak briefly and clearly on a given subject/problem, to ask questions and requests for clarification, and to contribute constructively to discussion.
- ✧ Students will have lot of opportunities to interact with other students in discussing some of the issues we will be dealing with.

Brief Description of Content

In taking this class students will be asked to into the nature of knowledge action and communication and the variegated way they are correlated and related each other. The inquiry will be based on recent philosophical works and to empirical studies pertaining to the field of cognitive science. To do so particular attention will given to the notion of information and the way human (and other species) use it and transmit it. We shall also look at the way humans (and other species) exploit their surrounding in gathering, storing, and passing information.

Evaluation

Average of the three parts

First Part

Instructor: Xabier Arrazola

Assignments, evaluation and grading

Every student will be required to do 3 (short) presentations, and write a (short) report on each (2-4 pages long) and participation on discussions / classes .

Program

1st session

- △ Motivation and aims of the course
- △ Introduction. Theory of knowledge
- △ The JTB classical conception
- △ Assignments for presentation / discussions

2nd session

- △ Presentations and discussion
 - Ayer, A. J., 1952, *Language, Truth and Logic*, ch. VII
 - Russell, B., 1910, *Knowledge by acquaintance vs. Knowledge by description*
- △ Knowledge by acquaintance vs. Knowledge by description
- △ Assignments for presentations / discussions

3rd session

- △ Discussion on 'Gettier's problems: Is Justified true Belief Knowledge?'
- △ Qualia: physicalism and the knowledge argument
- △ Assignments for presentation / discussions

4th session

- △ Presentations and discussion
 - Lewis, D., 1969, *Convention*, chapter II, sec. 1 and 2
 - Barwise, J., 1987, *Three Views of Common Knowledge*, TARK'88
- △ Common knowledge
- △ Alternative Accounts: Lewis, Aumann, Barwise, Gilbert
- △ Assignments for presentation / discussions

5th session

- △ Presentations and discussion
 - Schiffer, S.R., 1972, *Meaning*, chapters I-II
- △ Mutual Belief
- △ Some formal approaches to MB and CK

Basic bibliography

Austin, J.L., 1962^a, *How to Do Things with Words*,
Ayer, A. J., 1952, *Language, Truth and Logic*,
Ayer, A. J., 1956, *The Problem of Knowledge*,
Bach, K., 1994, ``Conversational Implicature''

BonJour, L., 1985, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*,
Bratman, M., 1987, *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*,
Carston, R., 2002, *Thoughts and Utterances. The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*,
Grice, H.P., 1989, *Studies in the Way of Words*,
Sperber, D. And D. Wilson, 1986, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*

Advanced Bibliography

John L. Austin. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
Alfred Jules Ayer. *Language, Truth and Logic*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1952.
<http://www.archive.org/details/AlfredAyer>.
Alfred Jules Ayer. *The Problem of Knowledge*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1956.
K. Bach. *Conversational Implicature*. *Mind and Language*, 9:124–162, 1994. Influential paper on the explicit and the implicit, distinguishing ‘implicature’ (with an ‘i’) from implicatures.
Jon Barwise, Jon. 1988. “Three Views of Common Knowledge”, in *Proceedings of the Second Conference on Theoretical Aspects of Reasoning About Knowledge*, ed. M.Y. Yardi. San Francisco: Morgan Kaufman, pp. 365-379.
Laurence Bonjour. *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
Michael E. Bratman. *Intention, Plans, and Practical Reason*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1987.
Robin Carston. *Thoughts and Utterances. The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
Edmund Gettier. *Is justified true belief knowledge?* *Analysis*, 23:121–123, 1963.
<http://www.ditext.com/gettier/gettier.html>.
H. Paul Grice. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989.
David Lewis. *Convention*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University. Press, 1969.
Bertrand Russell. *Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description*. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 11:108–128, 1910. Also in [10], chapter 5.
Bertrand Russell. *The Problems of Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5827>.
Stephen R. Schiffer. *Meaning*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
D. Sperber and D. Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.

Second part: The structure of intentional content

Instructor: Jérôme Dokic

Session #1

Discussion of Brentano's thesis that intentionality is the mark of the mental. Relationship between intentionality and consciousness.

Introduction of basic notions in the theory of intentionality: force *vs* content (at the level of language), psychological mode *vs* content (at the level of mental states), intentional content *vs* conditions of satisfaction.

Discussion of five general features of psychological modes: (i) thetic (mind-to-world direction of fit) *vs* telic (world-to-mind direction of fit); (ii) factivity; (iii) simplicity; (iv) polarity/valence; (v) "negraising" (existence or inexistence of polar opposite).

References:

- F. Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* [1874], ed. L. McAlister, London: Routledge, 1995.
- T. Crane, *Elements of Mind*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- J. Searle, *Intentionality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Ch. 1.

Session #2

Introduction and discussion of the distinction between propositional and non-propositional content. Discussion of the significance of the distinction in three types of cases: perception (epistemic *vs* simple perception), memory (factual *vs* episodic memory) and imagination (cognitive *vs* sensory imagination). Discussion of the claim that all mental states have propositional contents, notwithstanding grammatical appearances.

References:

- H. Bergson, *Matière et mémoire*, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1939. [Famous discussion of two forms of memory]
- F. Dretske, "Conscious Experience", *Mind*, Vol. 102, No 406, 1993, pp. 263-83. [Two forms of perceptual consciousness]
- B. Russell, *The Analysis of Mind*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1921. [Takes on Bergson's distinction between two forms of memory]
- J. Searle, *Intentionality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, Ch. 2.
- S. Yablo, "Is Conceivability a Guide to Possibility?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 53(1), 1993, pp. 1-42. [Objectual *vs* propositional imagination]

Session #3

Introduction and discussion of the distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual content. Three notions of propositional content: Russellian (propositions as structured set of worldly entities) *vs* Fregean (propositions as involving modes of presentation or concepts) *vs* Stalnakerian propositions (propositions as sets of possible worlds).

Discussion of three arguments in favour of non-conceptual content: (i) animal/young children cognition; (ii) finegrainedness of perception; (iii) belief as being rational/having an inferential power vs perception as being a-rational/not having an inferential power.

References:

- T. Crane, "The nonconceptual content of experience", in T. Crane (ed.), *The Contents of Experience*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.
- M. Dummett, "Proto-Thoughts", in *The Origins of Analytical Philosophy*, London: Duckworth, 1993.
- J. McDowell, *Mind and World*, Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1994, Lecture III.
- C. Peacocke, 1992. *A Study of Concepts*, Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press.
- R. Stalnaker, "What might nonconceptual content be?", in E. Villanueva (ed.), *Concepts* (Philosophical Issues, Volume 9), Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1998.

Session #4

Introduction and discussion of the notion of unarticulated constituents (of the propositions expressed by some utterances). Discussion of the Principle of Homomorphism, between the structure of the uttered sentence and the structure of the proposition. Discussion of three types of unarticulated constituents (Korta & Perry): (i) grammatically incomplete; (ii) grammatically complete but truth-conditionally incomplete; (iii) grammatically and truth-conditionally complete. Comparison with Recanati's account: mandatory vs optional unarticulated constituents; saturation vs free enrichment. Discussion about the possible generalization of the notion of unarticulated constituents to the realm of mental states.

References:

- R. Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances. The Pragmatics of Explicit Communication*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2002.
- J. Fodor, "Language, Thought and Compositionality", *Mind and Language* Vol. 16, No 1, 2001, pp. 1-15.
- K. Korta & J. Perry, *Critical Pragmatics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- F. Recanati, *Literal Meaning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- J. Perry, "Thought Without Representation", in *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and Other Essays*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Session #5 (4h)

This (last) session will consist in oral presentations by the students.

Evaluation

Students will be given a choice: either do a presentation of one paper/topic or write a short essay on it and handle it to the instructor.

Third part: Information and Communication

Instructor: María Ponte

Aims of this third part and Evaluation

This part of the course will be structured in five sessions; of 4 hours each. Half of the hours will be devoted to practical work.

The students will be given on paper on each session. They will have to read it during the practical hours and, one or two of them will make a short introduction (comment) of no more than 10 minutes at the beginning of next class.

Evaluation for this part will be made on the basis of these short presentations and participation during the seminars. Having read the texts is thus mandatory and an active participation will be required.

Session #1 Introduction

Introduction to the notion of communication and its failures. An epistemic perspective.

Reading Assignment

- Rosen, G. (2001) "Nominalism, Naturalism, Epistemic Relativism", in *Philosophical Perspectives* 15.

Secondary bibliography

- Peter van Inwagen, "It is Wrong, Everywhere, Always, and for Anyone, to Believe Anything upon Insufficient Evidence," in E. Stump and M. Murray (eds.), *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions* (Blackwell, 1999), pp. 273-85.
- Richard Feldman, "Reasonable Religious Disagreements," forthcoming. Available at <http://www.ling.rochester.edu/~feldman/index.html>
- Roger White, "Epistemic Permissiveness," *Philosophical Perspectives*, 19, Available at: <http://www.philosophy.fas.nyu.edu/docs/IO/1180/EP.pdf>

Session #2 Disagreements.

Discussion of Rosen's paper. Reasonable disagreements and epistemic permissiveness.

Disagreement: Genuine disagreements. Array of options. Discussion of Kölbel's paper. Can there be FD? Relativism, contextualism, realism (and other -isms)

Brief introduction to the topic of Information

Reading Assignment

- Kölbel, M. (2004) "Faultless Disagreements" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society vol. 104*
- Israel, D. & Perry, J. (1990) "What is Information?" in *Information, Language and Cognition* P. Hanson (ed.)

Secondary Literature

- MacFarlane, J. (2007) "Relativism and Disagreement" *Philosophical Studies*, 132, 17-31
- García-Carpintero, M. and Kölbel, M. (eds) (2008) *Relative Truth*, (pp. 297-310) Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Israel, D. & Perry, J. (1991) "Information and Architecture" in *Situation Theory and its applications* J. Barwise, J.M. Gawron, G. Plotkin and S. Tutiya (eds). Stanford University: CSLI.
- Dretske, F. (1981) *Knowledge and the flow of Information* Bradford Books, MIT Press

Session # 3 Information

Discussion of Israel and Perry's paper. Information. Flows of Information. Situation Semantics. Philosophy of Information. Floridi's account. Applications of the notion of Information

Reading Assignment

- Floridi, L. (2008) "Trends in the philosophy of information" in Pieter Adriaans and Johan van Benthem (eds.) *Handbook of Philosophy of Information*, Amsterdam - Oxford: Elsevier. 113-132.

Secondary literature

- Floridi, L. (2002) "What is the philosophy of information?" *Metaphilosophy*, (33.1/2).
- Floridi, L. (2011) *The Philosophy of Information*. Oxford University Press. 2011.

Session # 4 Relevance Theory and Gricean theory of communication

Presentation and discussion of Relevance Theory. Gricean Theory of Communication

Reading Assignment

- ♣ D. Sperber and D. Wilson. *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986.
- ♣ H. Paul Grice. *Studies in the Way of Words*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1989.

Session # 5 Speech Acts

Speech Acts Theory

- ♣ J. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969