

TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE (6 ECTS)

Research Master in Cognitive Science and Humanities: Language, Communication and Organization

2012-2014

Instructors:

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1. Description, motivations and aims

Philosophy of language has been one of the most interesting and productive areas of the philosophy of the twentieth-century. A series of issues such as reference, truth, propositional attitudes and attitude reports, context-sensitivity, indexicality, presupposition, and non-literal uses of language constituted the core problems of philosophy of language, with a clear impact on other areas of philosophy (notably philosophy of mind and epistemology) but also various disciplines such as logic, linguistics, psychology or computer science. In the last few decades, various issues about the role of context in determining utterance content, the semantics/pragmatics divide or the truth (or falsity) of different kinds of utterance have occupied the forefront of the debate.

The main aim of the course is to discuss both traditional topics like reference and indexicality as well as contemporary controversies such as the contextualism/minimalism debate on utterance content and the contextualism/relativism on truth. Some foundational issues in semantics and pragmatics will also be discussed.

The course is designed in a way that should answer the different needs of students with different backgrounds:

- students with little or no background in philosophy or linguistics will get a crash-course in philosophy of language, and a solid basis to pursue the study of these topics through specialized courses and to read the relevant literature
- students trained in semantics or pragmatics, already familiar with some of the issues to be discussed, will get a better insight into the theoretical assumptions underscoring them, and a better sense of the foundational issues in natural language semantics and pragmatics
- students trained in philosophy will get a course that addresses some classical issues in philosophy of language (such as the relationship between meaning, content and truth), but also some very recent ones (such as the contextualism/minimalism and the contextualism/relativism debates)

Classical reading sources in philosophy of language (recommended for the entire course)

Davies, Stephen (Ed.) (1991). *Pragmatics. A reader*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Martinich, Aloysius (Ed.) (2008). *The philosophy of Language*. Fifth Edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

2. Tentative course schedule

2.1. Ekain Garmendia

1st session

The very beginnings: Sense, Reference, Compositionality and Cognitive Significance.

Readings:

Frege, Gottlob: "On Sinn and Bedeutung", in Geach and Black (eds.): *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, Blackwell, 1952.

Russell, Bertrand: "On Denoting", *Mind* 14, 1905.

2nd session

Meanings and Uses. A threat to Compositionality.

Readings:

Strawson, Peter: "On Referring", *Mind* 59, 1950.

Travis, Charles: "Pragmatics", in Hale and Wright (eds.), *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, Blackwell, 1997.

3rd session

Reference, Descriptions and Causal Chains.

Readings:

Donnellan, Keith: "Reference and Definite Descriptions", *The Philosophical Review* 75, 1966.

Kripke, Saul: *Naming and Necessity* (first talk), Harvard University Press, 1980.

4th session

Semantic Externalism, Content and Rationality

Readings:

Putnam, Hilary: "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", in *Philosophical Papers Vol 2: Mind, Language and Reality*, Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Kripke, Saul: "A Puzzle about Belief", in Margalit (ed.): *Meaning and Use*, Reidel, 1979.

5th session

Narrow, Wide and Diagonal Contents and Two-Dimensionalism.

Readings:

Stalnaker, Robert: "Assertion", in Cole (ed.): *Syntax and Semantics 9*, New York Academic Press, 1978.

Chalmers, David: "Two-Dimensional Semantics", in Lepore and Smith (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language*, OUP, 2006.

2.2. Eros Corazza

(Readings are only indicative)

Session 1. Frege's Puzzles and the Sense/Reference Distinction

- G. Frege. "Sinn Und Bedeutung"/On Sense and Reference/On Sense and Denotation". In Martinich (and elsewhere)
- G. Frege. "Der Gedanke/The Thought" In Martinich (and elsewhere)
- M. Dummett M. 1973, *Frege Philosophy of Language*. Oxford UP, ch. 5, ch. 6, ch. 11

Session 2. The Sense/Reference Distinction Revisited

- J. Perry. "Frege on Demonstratives". In J. Perry 1994. *The Problem of the Essential Indexical*. Oxford UP and CSLI (and elsewhere)
- D. Kaplan. "Demonstratives" in Martinich
- K. Donnellan. "Reference and Definite Descriptions". In Martinich (and everywhere)
- S. Kripke. *Reference and Essence*. In Martinich (and everywhere)

Session 3. Millianims and Reference

- J. S. Mill. In Martinich
- H. Wettstein 2004. *The Magic Prism*. Oxford UP, chs. 1. 2. 3.

Session 4. Beliefs Ascriptions: The Naive theory

- N. Salmon. *Frege's Puzzle*: MIT: ch. 1., ch 2, ch. 3
- F. Recanati 1992. *Direct Reference*. Blackwell

Session 5. Beliefs Ascriptions: The Hidden Indexical Theory

- M. Crimmins & Perry J. "The Prince and the Phone Booth". In Perry 1994. *The Problem of the Essential Indexical and Other Essays*. Oxford UP and CSLI
- F. Recanati 1992. *Direct Reference*. Blackwell

Session 6. Essential Indexicals and Quasi-Indicators

- H.-N. Castañeda 1966. "'He': a study in the logic of self- consciousness". *Ratio* 8. 130--157.
- H.-N. Castañeda 1967. "Indicators and Quasi-Indicators". *American Philosophical Quarterly* 4: 85-100. Reprinted in Castañeda, H-N. 1989. *Thinking, language, and experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 206-231.
- H.-N. Castañeda. 1968. On the logic of attributions of self- knowledge to others. *The Journal of Philosophy* 65: 439-456.
- J. Perry. 1979. "The Problem of the Essential Indexical" In J. Perry. *The Problem of The Essential Indexical* (also in Martinich and elsewhere)
- E. Corazza. 2004. "Essential Indexicals and Quasi-Indicators". *Journal of Semantics*. (available on my webpage)

Session 7. Anaphora and Logophoric Pronouns

- H. Lasnik 1976. "Remarks on Coreference". *Linguistic Analysis* 2: 1-22. Reprint in Lasnik H. 1989. *Essays on Anaphora*. Dordrecht: Kluwer. 90-

109.

- E. Corazza. 2005. "On Epithets *qua* Attributive Anaphors". *Journal of Linguistics* (available on my webpage)

Session 8. General Discussion on possible Essays Topics

2.3. Isidora Stojanovic

Session 1:

- motivations aims of the third part of the course
- formal methods in philosophy of language: some background
- intensional operators, modal and temporal logics

Session 2:

- semantics for intensional *indexical* languages; arguments for double-indexing
- Kaplan's framework; double-indexing vs. two levels of meaning

Session 3:

- Stalnaker's two-dimensional approach
- first stab at the semantics/pragmatics distinction; from Grice to update semantics

Session 4 (+ student presentations):

- comparative study Kaplan vs. Stalnaker and Lewis's criticisms

Session 5 (+ student presentations):

- back to the semantics/pragmatics distinction: "unarticulated constituents"
- semantics, post-semantics, meta-semantics and pragmatics

Session 6:

- contextualism vs. (semantic) relativism: what is the debate really about
- from future contingents to predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals

Session 7 (+ student presentations):

- context-dependence, circumstance-relativity and assessment-sensitivity

Session 8 (+ student presentations):

- predicates of personal taste and epistemic modals (cont'd)

Recommended readings (subject to change)

Some classics

Kaplan, David. 1989. Demonstratives: an essay on the semantics, logic, metaphysics, and epistemology of demonstratives and other indexicals. Themes

from Kaplan, ed. by Joseph Almog, John Perry and Howard Wettstein, OUP. 481–563.

Lewis, David. 1980. Index, context and content. *Philosophy and grammar*, ed. by Stig Kanger and Sven Ohman. Dordrecht: Reidel. 78–100.

Stalnaker, Robert. 1999. *Context and Content*. Oxford UP.

On "unarticulated constituents"

Perry, John. 1986. Thought without representation. *Supplementary Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 60. 137-152.

Recanati, François. 2002. Unarticulated Constituents. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 25: 299-345.

Stanley, Jason. 2000. Context and logical form. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 23. 391-434.

On semantic relativism

Egan, Andy. (2007). Epistemic Modals, Relativism and Assertion, *Phil Studies* 133:1--22.

Laserson, Peter. 2005. Context dependence, disagreement, and predicates of personal taste. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 28. 643-686.

MacFarlane, John. 2003. Future contingents and relative truth. *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53. 321-336.

Stephenson, Tamina. 2007. Judge Dependence, Epistemic Modals, and Predicates of Personal Taste. *Linguistics and Philosophy* 30:487--525

Stojanovic, Isidora. 2008. The Scope and the Subtleties of the Contextualism-Literalism-Relativism Debate. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 2: 1171-1188

4. Assignments, evaluation and grading

Every student will be required to do 3 presentations (1 with each instructor) and write a final paper (10-15 pages long) on any of the topics discussed during the course. The final version of the paper should be simultaneously submitted to all the three instructors within three weeks after the last lecture.