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Office Hours: TR 11am–12pm

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Philosophy of Language

Fall 2019

TR 9:35–10:50am

Classroom: Furman 311

This is an upper-level course dedicated to philosophy of language from the late nineteenth century to the present. A guiding thread throughout the course will be the theme of the relationship between language and reality. How is it that words “refer” to objects? Do language and the world bear a similar structure, such that the former can successfully express the latter? In what ways can speech and other expressive acts help shape, constitute, and transform the world? The course is divided into three thematic units. Part 1 is dedicated to foundational issues in the philosophy of language, focusing on questions concerning meaning, communication, truth, and analyticity. This portion of the class will cover classic essays by Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Saul Kripke, W.V. Quine, and others. Part 2 will be dedicated to a careful reading of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, one of the most important philosophical works on language of the twentieth century. Part 3 will focus on issues that intersect with ethics and social philosophy, with a special emphasis on the idea of performative speech acts, introduced by J.L. Austin. In this section we will also read texts by Stanley Cavell, Rae Langton, Miranda Fricker, Sally Haslanger and others. By the end of the course, students will be familiar with several important trends in contemporary philosophy of language.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available for purchase at Barnes & Noble Vanderbilt)

1. J.L. Austin. (1962) *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2. A.P. Martinich and David Sosa (eds.). (2013) *The Philosophy of Language*, sixth edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
3. Ludwig Wittgenstein. (2009) *Philosophical Investigations*, revised fourth edition. Trans. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

All other readings will be provided as PDFs on Brightspace.

GRADING AND ASSIGNMENTS

1. **Participation (10%):** Come to class having read the assignment and ready to ask questions and participate in discussion.
2. **Short Commentaries (30%):** Over the course of the semester you will write five short (1- or 2-page) papers on the assigned reading for a particular session.
 - a. **How to write your commentaries:** Each of your five commentaries will respond to an assigned reading for a particular session. You will be given a specific task for each commentary (explained in detail on Brightspace):
 - i. Commentary #1: Unpack a Quote
 - ii. Commentary #2: Reconstruct the Author's Argument
 - iii. Commentary #3: Raise an Objection
 - iv. Commentary #4: Raise an Objection & Respond to It
 - v. Commentary #5: Raise an Objection & Respond to It
 - b. **Deadlines for Commentaries:** You will be assigned a group letter (A, B, C, D, E). You will find your group letter on five dates on the Reading Schedule below. You must post your commentary to Brightspace in the section labeled "Commentaries" prior to class that day.
 - c. **Grading for Commentaries:** You get a grade of "1" simply for completing the assignment satisfactorily, and "2" for an especially thoughtful response. If you hand in all the response papers and get "1" on them all, you get a B for this portion of your grade. For every response paper you fail to hand in, your grade is lowered one increment; for every response paper on which you receive a "2," your grade is raised one increment.
3. **Midterm Paper (30%):** A 5- to 7-page midterm paper is due on Oct. 3 by 11:59pm. It should be uploaded to Brightspace under "Assignments." A grading rubric will be provided. Paper topics may include any of the readings covered during the first half of the course. You are more than welcome to write on a topic that you have already written about in a commentary. Half grade penalty for each day late.
4. **Final Paper (30%):** A 6- to 8-page final paper is due on Dec. 9. by 11:59pm. It should be uploaded to Brightspace under "Assignments." A grading rubric will be provided. Paper topics may include any of the readings covered during the second half of the course. You are more than welcome to write on a topic that you have already written about in a commentary. Half grade penalty for each day late.

CLASS POLICIES

Please observe the following class policies, violation of which may result in a grade penalty (beginning with a reduction of your final grade by one increment [A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.]):

1. Always bring the assigned text to class with you.
2. No laptops, phones, or other electronic devices are allowed in class. Please take notes the old fashioned way.
3. No eating in class. Drinks are fine.
4. Come to class on time.
5. Be respectful of your fellow students in class discussion. If you are contributing a lot, that's great; but make sure you are giving a chance for your classmates to speak as well.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are allowed three unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Students' final grades will be reduced by one increment (A to A-, A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.) for each unexcused absence over three. If you have a legitimate reason for missing a class, contact me via email *prior* to the class or screening in question.

HONOR SYSTEM AND PLAGIARISM

All students are expected to complete the course requirements while fulfilling the Vanderbilt Honor System. Information on the Honor System can be found here: www.vanderbilt.edu/student_handbook/the-honor-system/. All cases of plagiarism or cheating will be handled through the Undergraduate Honor Council, and depending on severity may result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion.

READING SCHEDULE

“*PL*” refers to *The Philosophy of Language*, edited by Martinich and Sosa.

An asterisk (*) indicates additional recommended readings.

Date	Readings	Assignments
R 8/22	Introduction to the course	
Part 1. Foundational Issues		
T 8/27	J.S. Mill, “Of Names,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 29–34	A
R 8/29	Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 35–47	B
T 9/3	Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference” (cont’d)	C
R 9/5	Gottlob Frege, “The Thought,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 162–174	D
T 9/10	Saul Kripke, From <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , in <i>PL</i> , pp. 53–63	E
R 9/12	Hilary Putnam, “Meaning and Reference,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 66–73	A
T 9/17	Bertrand Russell, “Descriptions,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 114–120	B
R 9/19	H.P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 312–322	C
T 9/24	Donald Davidson, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 347–357	D
R 9/26	W.V. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 455–468	E
T 10/1	H.P. Grice and P.F. Strawson, “In Defense of a Dogma,” in <i>PL</i> , pp. 469–479	
R 10/3	NO CLASS	Midterm Paper posted to Brightspace by 11:59pm

Part 2. Wittgenstein's <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>		
T 10/8	<p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>, §§1–47</p> <p>*Optional: Marie McGinn, <i>The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations</i>, chap. 2 (PDF)</p>	A
R 10/10	<p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>, §§48–137</p> <p>*Optional: Marie McGinn, <i>The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations</i>, chap. 1 (PDF)</p>	B
T 10/15	<p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>, §§138–242</p> <p>*Optional: Marie McGinn, <i>The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations</i>, chap. 3 (PDF)</p>	C
R 10/17	<p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>, §§243–315</p> <p>*Optional: Marie McGinn, <i>The Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Wittgenstein and the Philosophical Investigations</i>, chap. 4 and 5 (PDF)</p>	D
T 10/22	<p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>, §§351–3, 428–438, 627–90</p> <p>Ludwig Wittgenstein, “Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment,” Section i and Section xi, §§314–364</p> <p>[<i>Note:</i> “Philosophy of Psychology—A Fragment” is included in the same volume as the text of the <i>Philosophical Investigations</i>]</p>	E
R 10/24	FALL BREAK	

Part 3. Speech Acts and the Social Sphere		
T 10/29	Ted Chiang, “Story of Your Life” (PDF)	
R 10/31	J.L. Austin, <i>How To Do Things With Words</i> , Lectures I and II	A
T 11/5	J.L. Austin, <i>How To Do Things With Words</i> , Lectures VI and XIII	B
R 11/7	J.L. Austin, <i>How To Do Things With Words</i> , Lectures IX and XI	C
T 11/12	Stanley Cavell, “Passionate and Performative Utterance: Morals of Encounter” (PDF)	D and E
R 11/14	Rae Langton, “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts” (PDF)	A
T 11/19	Miranda Fricker, <i>Epistemic Injustice</i> , chap. 7, “Hermeneutical Injustice” (PDF)	B
R 11/21	Ishani Maitra, “New Words for Old Wrongs” (PDF)	C
11/23– 11/30	THANKSGIVING BREAK	
T 12/3	Sally Haslanger, “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground” (PDF)	D
R 12/5	Sally Haslanger, “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground” (PDF)	E

*****Final Paper Posted to Brightspace by 11:59pm on Monday, Dec. 9*****