

## Phil 435: Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Language

**Class meeting time:** T 7:00 – 9:45 pm

**Classroom:** H-513

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**Instructor:** JeeLoo Liu

**Office location:** H-311A

**Office hours:** T 4:00 - 5:15 pm

R 1:00 – 2:00 pm

or by appointment

**Text:** A. P. Martinich (ed.) *Philosophy of Language*. [Required]

Saul Kripke. *Naming and Necessity* [Required]

**Both books are available at Little Professor.**

### Course Description:

Philosophy of language covers a variety of topics, such as: What is the nature and function of language? What do we *mean* when we speak – is it determined primarily by our intention or by what our words express? How do our words *refer* to objects in the world? How is the use of proper names established in our language? What is the connection between our language and the world? How does language depict reality? What is the connection between our thought and our speech? Is "private" language possible? How is communication accomplished? What is the speech act theory? How do we ascribe beliefs to others when we are using *our* words to capture what *they* have in mind? Any of these may be chosen as the topic of study in Advanced Topics in Philosophy of Language. Students are expected to do all readings thoroughly and write minimally ten summary essays. Class participation is strongly emphasized.

### Learning Goals:

1. Students will learn to reflect on the nature of language and the connection between language and thought. Students will learn about the famous debate on the possibility of private language initiated by Wittgenstein.
2. Students will understand the basics of the speech acts theory, advocated by Austin and Searle. Students will also be able to apply this theory to the general issue of the connection between speech and communication. They will learn about Davidson's philosophical methodology of interpretation.
3. Students will learn about the debate between internalism and externalism on the role external environment plays in the determination of our language of thought. This topic will enable students to investigate how the use of language is *logically* related to the social and the physical environment.
4. Students will be familiar with the debate between the description theory and the direct reference theory concerning the use of proper names, which is at the core of contemporary analytic philosophy of

language. They will be studying the classic works by Frege, Russell, Strawson, Donnellan, and Kripke.

5. Students will begin to understand the role of indexicals in our language, and see how the direct reference theory extends its analysis of proper names to indexicals. They will be studying Perry's work on indexicals and Kaplan's work on demonstratives.
6. Students will master the skills to write a philosophy paper that includes critical reasoning, sustained argumentation, and insight. Students will also improve their abilities to do research in philosophy.
7. Students will demonstrate the ability to organize and present course materials in class. This training can enhance their ability to teach or communicate ideas in public.

### **Methods of Assessment:**

<b>Mid-term exam (in class)</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>Final exam (non-cumulative)</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>Ten weekly essays</b>	<b>20 % [10 out of 11]</b>
<b>One final paper (8 pages)</b>	<b>20 %</b>
<b>Presentation of course material</b>	<b>10 %</b>
<b>Active class participation</b>	<b>10 %</b>
<b>Full attendance</b>	<b>2 points extra credit in final average</b>

**To receive a final grade for the course, no portion of your grade can be a "zero".**

**COURSE GRADES:** Calculated on the following scale:

95-100	A	74-76	C
90-94	A-	70-73	C-
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
84-86	B	64-66	D
80-83	B-	60-63	D-
77-79	C+	Under 60	F

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

“Academic dishonesty is comprised of obtaining or attempting to obtain credit for work by the use of any dishonest, deceptive, fraudulent, or unauthorized means.” The most commonly observed form of academic dishonesty is copying others' writings on the Internet. Even when you are merely borrowing a single sentence from someone else, doing so without proper quotation marks and author-attribution counts as plagiarism.

**Students who commit acts of academic dishonesty will automatically fail the course.**  
Students with questions about how to cite others' work should see the instructor.

### **Class Attendance and Participation:**

Students must be conscientious about attending classes on a regular basis. Any consecutive absences must be given proper explanation. **Since we only meet once a week, you are allowed one absence without explanation. After one absence, every absence will constitute a half-grade reduction in your final grade.** To excuse your absences from that point on, you will need to present credible documentation (busy at work is not an admissible excuse). Class participation includes active discussion in class, raising relevant questions, answering questions, and paying close attention in class. **Everyone (each student as well as the instructor) is responsible for making this class interesting, engaging, and thought-provoking.**

### **Classroom Etiquette:**

Classroom environment is for the instructor and all students to interact with one another in a professional and intellectual manner. Students are expected to observe common classroom etiquette. Behavior that interferes with classroom activities is considered disruptive behavior. Such behavior includes (but not restricted to)

- (i) constant late arrivals;
- (ii) early departures without proper explanation;
- (iii) chatting with your neighbors during lectures;
- (iv) eating in class;
- (v) doing things unrelated to the course in class, such as reading other books, doing assignments for other courses, or playing with your laptop.
- (vi) not turning off your cell phone in class.**

**Students with repeated disruptive behavior will be asked to leave the classroom.**

### **General Policies:**

1. To succeed in this course, you should keep pace with the syllabus. Your regular attendance is strongly emphasized, and you are also expected to finish the reading assignments prior to each class. If you can't make it to class on any given day, you should send me an e-mail explaining the reason. Attendance is highly emphasized in this class. All students with a full attendance record will receive two extra credits in their final grades.
2. All written assignments must be typed, double-spaced, and free of spelling errors.

3. Essays must be handed in **on the assigned date and in person (homework left in my mailbox or emailed during class time will be counted as 'late' – I don't want you to miss the class to write your essay during class time). I do not accept homework after the lecture is given.** The first three assignments will be mandatory, so that you can establish a good habit from the outset. You may skip one assignment without penalty. But it will not be easy to arrange make-up essays with our class schedule. You need to be organized and self-disciplined to turn in one essay per week.
4. The main purpose of these assignments is not for me to evaluate you, but for me to assist you. From your answers, I can understand where the difficulties lie and attempt to help you gain more understanding. As long as you have put in real effort, I will not fail your homework essays. I will collect the whole set at the end of the semester to assign a total grade on the basis of your effort and improvement.
5. You are to write one term paper on a topic of your choice (my approval required). To prepare for your final paper, you need to do a polished draft first (due on April 10). I will give you feedback for further improvement on your paper. The revised paper is due on the last day of class. **A half-grade deduction will be made for each day delayed (for both deadlines).** I will schedule a paper conference with you to discuss your term paper project.
6. Students will be asked to give presentations on course materials. The presentation will take about 30 minutes. Presenters should prepare an outline of the presented material as handouts, or they have the option of using Powerpoint. This is a chance for students to develop their ability to organize and present course materials.
7. Exams will be given in the form of essay questions (study questions will be prepared for each exam). **No make-up exam will be given unless you obtain permission from me at least two days in advance or if you present your special reason with acceptable documentation.**
8. **Students are expected to arrive on time for exams. Late arrivals will not be given time extension.**
9. **To receive a final grade for the course, students must complete all assignments.** In other words, if you get a “zero” for any of the assignments (paper, exams, homework, participation and presentation), you will automatically fail the course.
10. You are encouraged to meet with me during my office hours, send e-mail messages to me, or call me if you have any question regarding the course.



SCHEDULE

<u>Date</u>	<u>Content of discussion</u>	<u>Assignments for this class</u>
<b>Week 1</b> T 1/23	Introductory Remarks: What is Philosophy of Language?	None
<b>I. The Nature of Language</b>		
<b>Week 2</b> T 1/30	<b>What is a language?</b> (1) David Lewis: Languages and Language (2) John Lock: Of Words <b>Essay #1 due in class</b> [mandatory]	<i>PL</i> pp. 562-580 <i>PL</i> pp. 509-513
<b>Week 3</b> T 2/6	<b>Could there be a private language?</b> (1) John Cook: Wittgenstein on Privacy (2) Saul Kripke: On Rules and Private Language <b>Essay #2 due in class</b> [mandatory]	<i>PL</i> pp. 514-530 <i>PL</i> pp. 531-541
<b>II. Speech and Communication</b>		
<b>Week 4</b> T 2/13	<b>What is a speech act?</b> (1) J. L. Austin: Performative Utterances (2) John Searle: The Structure of Illocutionary Acts <b>Essay #3 due in class</b> [mandatory]	<i>PL</i> pp. 130-139 <i>PL</i> pp. 140-150
<b>III. Interpretation and Translation</b>		
<b>Week 5</b> T 2/20	<b>How do I interpret what you mean if you use the wrong words?</b> (1) Donald Davidson: Belief and the Basis of Meaning (2) Donald Davidson: A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs <b>Essay #4 due in class</b>	<i>PL</i> pp. 464-472 <i>PL</i> pp. 473-483
<b>Week 6</b> T 2/27	<b>Are meanings and beliefs “in the head”? -- Twin-Earth Visited</b> (1) Hilary Putnam: Meaning and Reference (2) Tyler Burge: Individualism and the Mental <b>Essay #5 due in class</b>	<i>PL</i> pp. 288-294 [handouts]
<b>Week 7</b> T 3/6	<b>How do I report your belief if your belief is in your head?</b> (1) W. V. Quine: Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes (2) Saul Kripke: A Puzzle about Belief <b>Essay #6 due in class</b>	<i>PL</i> pp. 355-360 <i>PL</i> pp. 405-424

**Week 8**  
T 3/13 (1) **Mid-term Exam** (Bring a large blue book)  
(2) Introduction to the New Topic: Frege's Puzzle

#### IV. Reference and Descriptions

**Week 9**  
T 3/20 **What does a name *mean*?**  
(1) John Stuart Mill: Of Names *PL* pp. 266-271  
(2) Gottlob Frege: On Sense and Nominatum (Reference) *PL* pp. 199-210  
**Essay #7 due in class**

**Week 10**  
T 3/27 **Spring Recess**

**Week 11**  
T 4/3 **How do we *denote* something or someone?**  
(1) Bertrand Russell: On Denoting *PL* pp. 212-219  
(2) Bertrand Russell: Descriptions *PL* pp. 221-227  
**Essay #8 due in class**


**Week 12**  
T 4/10 **How do we *refer* to something or someone?**  
(1) P. F. Strawson: On Referring *PL* pp. 228-242  
(2) Keith Donnellan: Reference and Definite Descriptions *PL* pp. 247-258  
**Term Paper (minimum 8 pages) due in class**

**Week 13**  
T 4/17 **What is the direct reference theory?**  
Saul Kripke: Naming and Necessity, Lecture I *NN* pp. 22-70  
**Essay #9 due in class**

**Week 14**  
T 4/24 **What is the direct reference theory?**  
Saul Kripke: Naming and Necessity, Lecture II *NN* pp. 71-105  
**Essay #10 due in class**

**Week 15**  
T 5/1 **What other things do I refer *directly*?**  
(1) John Perry: The Problem of the Essential Indexical *PL* pp. 339-348  
(2) David Kaplan: Dthat *PL* pp. 325-337  
**Essay #11 due in class**

**Week 16**  
T 5/8 **Last day: Review**  
**Revised Final Paper due in class**



**Week 17**  
T 5/15 **Final Exam (Tuesday 7:30 – 9:20 PM) (H-513)**  
Bring a large blue book.  
Bring the whole set of homework essays for a total grade.