Philosophy of Language
Course Syllabus
Phil 387, Spring 2015

Basic Course Information

Instructor: Tony Roy
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Web: http://philosophy.csusb.edu/~troy/
Logic Lab: UH 047, see http://philosophy.csusb.edu/logicLab.html
Office hrs: T 11:00 – 11:50, Th 2:00 – 2:50, F 10:00 – 11:50 and by appointment (or try me anytime I am in)
Meetings: TR 12:00 – 1:50, CE 117

Brief Description

Philosophy of language is central to contemporary philosophy. It is important for its own sake, but also for thinking about what counts as a philosophical question, and what counts as a legitimate answer. This course will provide a foothold from which to explore questions in the philosophy of language. After some introductory material, the major portion of the course will focus on theories of names and naming (a central topic in recent debate). In the process, we will have considered some of the seminal works in contemporary philosophy of language, including works from G. Frege, B. Russell, and S. Kripke.

Course Expectations

The official prerequisite is satisfaction of the GE critical thinking and philosophy requirements. As such, the assumption is of a certain background maturity and skill. No particular content, logical or otherwise, is assumed. In general, I am obligated to be clear, responsive to questions, provide helpful feedback on work, and so forth. At the same time, you cannot expect to succeed without regular class attendance, class participation, appearance at office hours, and especially faithful, on-time completion of assignments. We need also to respect one another by observing basic rules of course etiquette: Apart from special arrangements,
arrive on time, do not leave early, or come and go during class. If you are in the room, be engaged in class activities (not surfing the web, reading for other classes, or the like). Apart from special arrangement, phones should be off or completely silenced (not on vibrate) during class; if one rings, do not answer; as this can be difficult to remember, if your phone does ring during class, the ‘penalty’ is to bring cookies for all at the next class meeting.

Texts

The readings for this course are from

- G. McCulloch, *The Game of the Name* (M)
- Garfield and Kiteley, *Meaning and Truth: The Essential Readings in Modern Semantics* (G)
- S. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (K)

These are available in the bookstore. Some readings will be made available by handout (H) and the web (W). In addition M. Davidson, *On Sense and Direct Reference: Readings in the Philosophy of Language* is available in the lab and may be useful especially for paper topics.

Grading

Grades are based homework (15%), midterm exam (20%), final exam (25%), and paper project (40%); there is also some opportunity to obtain extra credit.

*Homework:* The homework (15% of the grade) will be regularly assigned in class and due at the following class meeting. In general, homework is to be typed and turned in as hard copy. Approximately ten assignments will be collected randomly over the term and marked on a scale of 0 – 3 as follows: 3 for homework that is complete, crisp, clear and to the point. 2 for homework that is basically on track, though ‘wobbly’ in some respect. 1 for homework that makes progress toward the assignment, but goes off-track in some serious way. 0 for homework that is not received, or so flawed that the assignment is not significantly addressed. Note that flaws of grammar or presentation may result in failure to address an assignment. There is no makeup for this component of the grade apart from compelling, continuing, and documented reasons. Thus the homework component of the grade samples regular effort and attendance. However: An average of 2 is sufficient for an overall homework score of 100%; so a score of 3 is a way to make up for low or missing homework scores, or if scores are otherwise strong, to obtain extra credit. Also the homework score is calculated by dividing points earned by two less than points possible; the effect is to forgive one missing assignment, or if all are worked, to treat one assignment as extra credit. Thus solid homework represents different ways to earn extra credit. Homework assignment schedules appear on the website [http://rocket.csusb.edu/~troy/courses.htm](http://rocket.csusb.edu/~troy/courses.htm) (not on Blackboard).
**Midterm and Final:** The midterm (20% of the grade) and final (25% of the grade) are comprehensive take-home examinations of material from lectures and reading. The final will be due at the regular exam period (Tu 6/16). The midterm will be given according to the attached schedule.

**Paper project:** There are two options for the paper project.

(i) You may choose to do two short (5-6 page) papers on topics to be assigned in class. These topics will be closely related to lecture and reading; no outside reading will be required. Each paper will be worth 20% of the total grade. For the first there will be the opportunity to rewrite; if this option is chosen, the first draft will count for 5% of the total grade, and the second 15%.

(ii) If your score on the midterm is at least 80%, you may choose to write a single (10-12 page) paper. Any such paper should have as its focus some one chapter or reading from our texts (including Davidson) together with a published criticism of it (possibly also from our texts). The paper is due in three installments, to coincide with the 3 due dates of option (i): first, a 5 page start to your paper, in which you set up the positions of your authors and so the issues to be discussed; second, a version of your complete paper; and third, the final version. Your topic and reading must be approved by Prof Roy by the date of the first paper assignment. So you can be thinking about it up to then. Then the drafts count 5%, 5%, and 30%.

*Note that short introductions in (G) give a preliminary way to explore topics in that text. In some cases, following notes will provide interesting contrast papers. Also, many of our readings are famous, and *Philosopher’s Index*, available through the Library and also linked from the front of Prof’s Roy’s webpage, is a good way to track down published reactions.*

Late papers will be accepted up to the last day of instruction with a 5% deduction and up to the final exam with a 10% deduction. Nothing will be accepted after the final exam. Exceptions require some exceptional circumstance (not “I have a lot to do”) and prior approval of the instructor.

**Notes:** All grades are recorded numerically. In general, 90% or over is an ‘A’, 80% or over is a ‘B’, etc. Your instructor reserves the right to lower this scale in calculation of final grades (as 89% or over an ‘A’ etc.); ordinarily this does not happen.

Writing is one of the most important things you “take away” from a course or degree in philosophy. And a course like this is impossible if you fall behind conceptually. In case of special difficulties (especially on papers) I reserve the right to impose requirements including prior submission of outlines, notes from the Writing Center, Logic Lab or the like.

You are encouraged to discuss anything, especially homework and reading with other students, the instructor, and/or assistants in the Logic Lab or Writing Center (see [http://www.ugs.csusb.edu/wc/](http://www.ugs.csusb.edu/wc/)). With this said, all written work, especially papers and exams, is to be your own. Academic honesty is always essential, and particularly so in the give-and-take of philosophy, where the *project* is to work through and clarify your own views. Plagiarism will
result in an automatic F for an assignment, and up to an F for the course along with standard University discipline. If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to talk things over with me. See also “What is Plagiarism” and the “Writing Guide” from my website http://philosophy.csusb.edu/~troy/courses.htm and also p. 54 of the CSUSB Bulletin http://catalog.csusb.edu/documents/2012-2014.pdf#page=54.

Order of Instruction (tentative!)

For the first 2/3 of the course, we will move sequentially through the McCulloch text, with readings as follows,

1. Introductory
   M: chapter 1
   G: Mill, “Of Names and Propositions”

   – midterm exam

2. The basic problem
   M: chapter 2

   – first paper assigned

3. The Official View
   M: chapter 3
   Russell, “Mr Strawson on Referring”

4. The New Orthodoxy
   M: chapter 4
   K: lecture 1

   – second paper assigned
For the last 1/3 of the course, we will cover portions of (M) chapters 5, 6, 8 along with Frege, “On Sense and Nominatum” (G); Putnam, “The meaning of ‘Meaning’” (H); the second lecture of (K); and then some responses to the new theory including possibly excerpts from an article of my own.

The payoff

Anyone in this class already has some commitment to philosophy – to the problems of philosophy, to its value as a mental discipline. This course fulfills a requirement in the philosophy major, so some may not be here because of a commitment to philosophy of language as such. Naturally, I hope that you will find the questions incredibly interesting for their own sake. In addition, however, there is a fairly obvious sense in which questions about language are intimately related to logic and mind and so ultimately to most any aspect of philosophy (and life more generally). Thus, for whatever philosophical questions one cares to ask, it is worthwhile to have a background understanding of how language connects up to the world. These factors help explain the place of philosophy of language, alongside metaphysics, in the philosophy major.

The details

There are no adds after the census date. See detailed policies for adds and drops beginning on p. 48 of the CSUSB Bulletin http://catalog.csusb.edu/documents/2012-2014.pdf#page=48.

If you are in need of accommodation for a disability in order to participate in this class, please contact Services to Students with Disabilities at UH 183 (909) 537-5238. Individuals with disabilities should prepare for an emergency ahead of time by instructing a classmate and the instructor. If you require assistance in the event of an emergency, you are advised to establish a buddy system with a buddy and alternate buddy in the class.

Everyone should receive messages from their CSUSB e-mail. If CSUSB is not your regular address, you can set it to forward messages to your regular address.