

Philosophy 24010/34010

Meaning and Reference

Winter 2012

TTH 10:30-11:50

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we address one of the central and most fascinating philosophical questions about linguistic meaning: what is the relationship between meaning and reference? We will study a range of classical and contemporary theories about the semantics of referring expressions such as proper names, definite descriptions, and indexicals. Readings will include Frege, Russell, Strawson, Kripke, Donnellan, and Kaplan, among others. Throughout, we will try to reach a better understanding of how questions about meaning and reference connect with a range of topics that are central to philosophical theorizing, including the connection between propositional attitudes and the explanation of action, the role of the principle of compositionality in formal semantics, the question of whether there is a level of mental experience that is epistemically transparent, the relation between thought and language, the nature of fictional and non-existent objects, and the interaction between semantics and pragmatics.

BOOKS

The following text is required for the course, available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore (in the basement of 5757 University Ave.):

— Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Oxford: Blackwell (1980)

The remaining course readings will be available through the course's Chalk website. The following anthology contains several of the course readings in addition to a wide range of useful secondary materials (available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore):

— Martinich, *The Philosophy of Language*, 5th edition, New York: Oxford University Press (2006)

All of the above books as well as some other useful material are on reserve at Regenstein.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Undergraduates are required to write two short paper assignments (4-5 pages each) and one final paper (7-8 pages). All papers are due by 5pm on the assigned day in Professor Willer's mailbox in Stuart 202.

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| First paper | due January 30 th | worth 25% |
| Second paper | due February 20 th | worth 35% |
| Final Paper | due March 13 th | worth 40% |

Paper topics will be uploaded to the Chalk site in advance of the due dates. Students may, if they wish, design their own paper topics after consultation with the instructor. Late papers will be docked a grade per day (e.g., B+ to B) unless you have received approval ahead of time. There will be no final exam.

Graduate students may, if they wish, opt to write a short midterm paper (4-5 pages, due January 30th, worth 25%) and a substantial term paper (15+ pages, due March 13th, worth 75%) in place of the two short paper assignments and final paper. Topics must be approved ahead of time, concern an issue discussed in the class, and make significant use of course readings.

Attendance of lectures and discussion sections is expected. Class participation will play a decisive role in determining the final grade of borderline cases.

ROADMAP

The following schedule provides an overview over the topics that we will address during this semester as well as the assigned readings. Additional recommended readings will be announced in class. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Chalk as changes are made.

| Date | Topic | Readings |
|----------------|--|--|
| <i>Week 1</i> | <i>Introduction</i> | |
| 01/03 | Basic Remarks on Meaning and Reference | |
| 01/05 | Logic and Meaning | |
| <i>Week 2</i> | <i>Frege's Project</i> | |
| 01/10 | Fregean Senses | Frege, "Sense and Reference" |
| 01/12 | | |
| <i>Week 3</i> | <i>Frege's Project Continued</i> | |
| 01/17 | Fregean Thoughts | Frege, "The Thought" |
| 01/19 | Frege on Predication and Quantification | Frege, "On Concept and Object" |
| <i>Week 4</i> | <i>Two Theories of Definite Descriptions</i> | |
| 01/24 | Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions | Russell, "On Denoting" |
| 01/26 | Strawson on Definite Descriptions | Strawson, "On Referring" |
| <i>Week 5</i> | <i>Reference and Definite Descriptions</i> | |
| 01/31 | Donnellan on Definite Descriptions | Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions" |
| 02/02 | Speaker's Reference vs Semantic Reference | Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" |
| <i>Week 6</i> | <i>Names and Descriptions</i> | |
| 02/07 | Kripke Against Descriptivism | Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture I |
| 02/09 | Direct Reference, Causal Theory | Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture II |
| <i>Week 7</i> | <i>Natural Kind Terms</i> | |
| 02/14 | Kripke on Natural Kind Terms | Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture III |
| 02/16 | Putnam on Externalism | Putnam, "Meaning and Reference" |
| <i>Week 8</i> | <i>Millianism and Belief</i> | |
| 02/21 | Kripke's Puzzle about Belief | Kripke, "A Puzzle about Belief" |
| 02/23 | | |
| <i>Week 9</i> | <i>Indexicals</i> | |
| 02/28 | Kaplan on Demonstratives | Kaplan, "Demonstratives" |
| 03/01 | | |
| <i>Week 10</i> | <i>Belief and Action</i> | |
| 03/06 | Essential Indexicals | Perry, "The Essential Indexical" |
| 03/08 | Reading Period—No Class | |