

Philosophy 24010

Meaning and Reference

Winter 2020

TR 11:00–12:20

Instructor: Malte Willer
Email: willer@uchicago.edu
Office hours: R 1:30–3:20
Office: Stuart 231-D

Course Assistant: Thomas Willis
Email: energeia@uchicago.edu

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 (5751 S Woodlawn Ave.):

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

The remaining course readings will be available through the course's Canvas website. The following anthology contains several of the course readings in addition to a wide range of useful secondary materials:

— Martinich, *The Philosophy of Language*, 6th edition, New York: Oxford University Press (2012)

The following companion contains several helpful introductions to key topics in the philosophy of language:

— Russell and Graff Fara, *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language*, New York: Routledge (2012)

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

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

First paper	due January 28 th	worth 25%
Second paper	due February 18 th	worth 35%
Final Paper	due March 17 th	worth 40%

Paper topics will be uploaded to the Canvas 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.

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 Canvas as changes are made.

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Sense and Reference	Mill, "Of Names" Frege, "Sense and Reference"
Week 2	Frege's Project	Frege, "On Concept and Object" Frege, "The Thought"
Week 3	Definite Descriptions	Russell, "On Denoting" Strawson, "On Referring"
Week 4	Reference and Definite Descriptions	Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions" Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference" Reimer, "Donnellan's Distinction/Kripke's Test"
Week 5	Names and Descriptions	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lectures I–II
Week 6	Natural Kind Terms	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture III Putnam, "Meaning and Reference"
Week 7	Puzzles about Belief	Kripke, "A Puzzle about Belief" Saul, "Substitution and Simple Sentences"
Week 8	Indexicals	Kaplan, "Demonstratives" (selections)
Week 9	Predicativism	Graff Fara, "Names are Predicates"
Week 10	Conclusion & Outlook	(no reading)