

# Philosophy 58012 // Linguistics 58012

Language, Evidence, and Mind

Spring 2024

W 9:30–12:20

Instructor:	Chris Kennedy	Malte Willer
Email:	ck@uchicago.edu	willer@uchicago.edu
office hours:	by appointment	by appointment
Office:	Rosenwald 205E	Stuart 228

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

The observation that ordinary uses of predicates such as *tasty* and *beautiful* trigger an acquaintance inference—they suggest that the speaker has first-hand knowledge of the item under consideration—has received immense attention by philosophers as well as by linguists in recent years. The goal of this seminar is to arrive at a comprehensive and systematic understanding of this phenomenon. We will explore the significance of the acquaintance inference in semantics and philosophy of language (in particular for our understanding of the interaction between literal meaning and discourse pragmatics) but also for aesthetics and metaethics. From the linguistics side, we will explore intricate questions surrounding the projection properties of acquaintance inferences as well as issues surrounding *subjective* attitude verbs. The guiding hypothesis of this interdisciplinary seminar is that natural language predicate expressions lexically specify what it takes for their use to be properly “grounded” in a speaker’s state of mind—what state of mind a speaker must be in for a predication to be in accordance with the norms governing assertion—and that these grounding constraints may compositionally interact with other other natural language expressions in interesting ways.

## READINGS AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

All course readings will be available through the course’s Canvas website. Students wishing to take the class for *P*-credit are expected to regularly attend class and do all the assigned reading. Students wishing to take the class for *Q*-credit must, in addition, produce a substantial research paper (15+ pages). The topic must be approved ahead of time, concern an issue discussed in the class, and make significant use of course readings.

## 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	The Acquaintance Inference	Kant, <i>Critique of Judgment</i> (selections) Robson, “Norms of Belief and Norms of Assertion in Aesthetics” Franzén, “Aesthetic Evaluation and First-hand Experience” Gorodeisky and Marcus, “Aesthetic Rationality” MacFarlane, <i>Assessment Sensitivity</i> , Ch. 1
Week 2	Beyond Acquaintance	Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms” Soria Ruiz and Franzén, “Moral and Moorean Incoherencies” Franzén, “Evaluative Discourse and Affective States of Mind” Francén, “Finding Wrong”
Week 3	Subjectivity: Basics	Lasersohn, <i>Subjectivity and Perspective</i> (selections) Kennedy, “Two Sources of Subjectivity” Sæbø, “Judgment Ascriptions”
Week 4	Varieties of Subjectivity	Stojanovic, “Disagreements about Taste vs. Disagreements about Value” McNally and Stojanovic, “Aesthetic Adjectives” McNally and Stojanovic, “Are Moral Predicates Subjective? A Corpus Study” Bylina, “Judge-dependence in Degree Constructions”
Week 5	Subjectivity, Contingency, and Openness	Kennedy and Willer, “Familiarity Inferences, Subjective Attitudes and Counterstance Contingency”
Week 6	Projection and Obviation	Ninan, “Taste Predicates and the Acquaintance Inference” Anand and Korotkova, “Acquaintance Content and Obviation” Willer and Kennedy, “Assertion, Expression, Experience” Charlow, “Experiential Content”
Week 7	Projection and Obviation (cont.)	Ninan, “The Projection Problem for Predicates of Taste” Ninan, “An Expressivist Theory of Taste Predicates”
Week 8	Acquaintance and Evidence	Rudolph, “Acquaintance and Evidence in Appearance Language” Muñoz, “The Acquaintance Inference as an Evidential Effect” Anand and Korotkova, “ <i>Find, must</i> and Conflicting Evidence”
Week 9	Why Acquaintance?	Khoo, “Judging for Ourselves”