

Philosophy 52020

Meaning Without Truth

Winter 2011

W 4:30-7:20

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

We will focus on philosophical and linguistic challenges to the dogma, going back at least to Frege, that a successful theory of meaning must be based on the notion of truth. We will begin by studying the foundations of approaches to meaning that stand in the Fregean tradition and also try to understand the challenges that arise for any semantic theory that departs from the truth-conditional perspective on meaning and communication. We will then consider various reasons for departing from the Fregean picture, including considerations about communication, anaphoricity and normativity, and how they motivate non-truth-conditional approaches to meaning and communication such as dynamic semantics and expressivism. The class addresses advanced topics in philosophy of language, but is at the same time concerned with foundational semantic questions in epistemology, metaphysics and ethics, and it will be of interest to anyone working in these areas.

BOOKS

All course readings will be available through the course's Chalk website. The following anthologies contain several of the course readings in addition to a wide range of useful secondary materials:

- Davis and Gillon, *Semantics: A Reader*, New York: Oxford University Press (2004)
- Martinich, *The Philosophy of Language*, 5th edition, New York: Oxford University Press (2006)
- Portner and Partee, *Formal Semantics: The Essential Readings*, Oxford: Blackwell (2002)

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

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a substantial research paper (15-25 pages) due on March 15th, in Professor Willer's mailbox in the Philosophy Dept. Office (Stuart 202). The topic must be approved ahead of time. Topics must concern an issue discussed in the class and papers must 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. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Chalk as changes are made.

Part 1: Semantics in the Fregean Tradition

Date	Topic	Readings
01/05	Introduction: Fregean Beginnings	Frege, "Sense and Reference" Frege, "The Thought"
01/12	The Frege-Geach Problem	Frege, "Negation" Geach, "Assertion" Hare, "Meaning and Speech Acts" Searle, "Meaning and Speech Acts"

01/19	Intensional Semantics	Frege, "On Concept and Object" Lewis, "General Semantics"
01/26	Modality	Kratzer, "Modality" MacFarlane, "Epistemic Modals are Assessment-Sensitive"

Part 2: The Route Towards Dynamic Semantics

Date	Topic	Readings
02/02	Dynamic Pragmatics	Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game" Stalnaker, "Assertion"
02/09	Update Semantics	Veltman, "Defaults in Update Semantics"
02/16	Discourse Representation Theory	Kamp, "A Theory of Truth and Semantic Representation"
02/23	Dynamic Predicate Logic	Groenendijk and Stokhof, "Dynamic Predicate Logic"

Part 3: The Route Towards Expressivism

Date	Topic	Readings
03/02	Expressivism: Its Motivations	Gibbard, <i>Thinking How to Live</i> , chapters 1-4
03/09	Expressivism: Its Prospects	Schroeder, "How Expressivists Can and Should Solve Their Problem with Negation" Portner, "Imperatives and Modals"

FURTHER READING

The following is a (far from comprehensive) list of additional useful readings that are relevant for the topics discussed over the quarter:

Part 1: Semantics in The Fregean Tradition

Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic*
 Carnap, *Meaning and Necessity*
 Dowty et al., *Introduction to Montague Semantics*
 Dummett, *Frege: Philosophy of Language*
 Hare, *The Language of Morals*
 Montague, "The Proper Treatment of Quantifiers in Ordinary English"
 Portner, *Modality*
 Stevenson, *The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms*

Part 2: The Route Towards Dynamic Semantics

Asher and Lascarides, *Logics of Conversation*
 Beaver, *Presupposition and Assertion in Dynamic Semantics*
 van Bentham, *Essays in Logical Dynamics*
 Heim, *The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases*
 Muskens et al., "Dynamics"
 van der Sandt, "Presupposition Projection as Anaphora Resolution"
 Zeevat, "Presupposition and Accommodation in Update Semantics"

Part 3: The Route Towards Expressivism

Blackburn, *Ruling Passions*
 Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*
 Schroeder, *Being For: Evaluating The Semantic Program of Expressivism*