

Philosophy 54605 // Linguistics 54605

Subjectivity

Autumn 2014

T 3:00–5:50

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

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Linguists and philosophers have traditionally examined the role of language and thought as a medium for (mis)representing objective facts about the world we are living in. However, language is also an important tool for sharing subjective perspectives with others, and clearly not all thoughts are objective. Taking subjectivity as a sui generis phenomenon that does not reduce to another instance of descriptive talk and thought has repercussions that go beyond the traditional distinction between linguistics and philosophy: it impacts philosophical attempts to understand the nature of normative thoughts no less than the way linguists tend to think to about the nature of linguistic meaning. This is the first in a two-course sequence that addresses the exciting resulting challenges in a systematic manner, to be offered jointly by Professors Chris Kennedy and Malte Willer. The first course will be taught by Malte Willer and focus on foundational philosophical issues surrounding subjectivity in language and thought, including issues pertaining to normativity and general considerations about the shape a theory of natural language meaning must have to take the phenomenon of subjectivity seriously. The second course will be taught by Chris Kennedy in the Winter Quarter, 2015 and focus on linguistic issues surrounding subjectivity, including a rich variety of empirical questions and the impact that treating subjectivity as a sui generis phenomenon has for theoretical linguistics.

BOOKS

The relevant literature is massive and it is unavoidable to omit a lot of interesting discussions. The following books are required and available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore (5751 S. Woodlawn Avenue):

- Gibbard, *Wise Choices, Apt Feelings*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1990)
- MacFarlane, *Assessment Sensitivity*, New York: Oxford University Press (2014)
- Schroeder, *Being For*, New York: Oxford University Press (2008)

The following books, while not in the focus of our attention due to time constraints, touch upon many issues that are relevant for this class and are recommended for purchase:

- Cappelen & Hawthorne, *Relativism and Monadic Truth*, New York: Oxford University Press (2009)
- Gibbard, *Thinking How To Live*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (2003)

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+ pages) due on December 12th, 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. 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
Week 1	Early Noncognitivism	Ayer, <i>Language, Truth and Logic</i> , Ch. 6 Frege, "Negation" Geach, "Assertion" Hare, <i>The Language of Morals</i> , Ch. 1 Stevenson, "The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms"
Week 2	Expressivism	Gibbard, <i>Wise Choices, Apt Feelings</i> , Chs. 1–5, 8–10 Schroeder, <i>Being For</i> , Chs. 1–2
Week 3	Expressivism and Negation I	Gibbard, <i>Thinking How to Live</i> , Chs. 1–4 Dreier, "Negation for Expressivists" Schroeder, <i>Being For</i> , Ch. 3 Unwin, "Norms and Negation: A Problem for Gibbard's Logic"
Week 4	Expressivism and Negation II	Schroeder, <i>Being For</i> , Chs. 4–9, 12
Week 5	Moral Relativism	Harman, "Moral Relativism Defended" Kölbel, "Faultless Disagreement" Kölbel, "Moral Relativism" MacFarlane, <i>Assessment Sensitivity</i> , Chs. 1–4
Week 6	Taste	Lasersohn, "Context Dependence, Disagreement, and Predicates of Personal Taste" Lasersohn, "Relative Truth, Speaker Commitment, and Control of Implicit Arguments" MacFarlane, <i>Assessment Sensitivity</i> , Chs. 5–7
Week 7	Modals	Egan, "Epistemic Modals, Relativism, and Assertion" Giannakidou and Mari, "The Future in Greek and Italian" MacFarlane, <i>Assessment Sensitivity</i> , Chs. 9–12 Stephenson, "Judge Dependence, Epistemic Modals, and Predicates of Personal Taste"
Week 8	Criticisms	Glanzberg, "Context, Content, and Relativism" Lasersohn, "Quantification and Perspective in Relativist Semantics" Moltmann, "Relative Truth and the First Person" Stojanovic, "Talking about Taste"
Week 9	Dynamics	Barker, "The Dynamics of Vagueness" Barker, "Negotiating Taste" Kennedy, "Two Sources of Subjectivity" Willer, "Advice for Noncognitivists"
Week 10	Disagreement?	Sundell, "Disagreements about Taste" Plunkett and Sundell, "Disagreement and the Semantics of Normative and Evaluative Terms"