

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Social and Political Language

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course aims to provide students with in-depths knowledge about contemporary issues within philosophy of language and will do so by exploring distinctively political and social aspects of language and discourse. The course will begin by providing a broad background in the major concepts in philosophy of language that will be needed to examine the political and social language that will follow in the course. The range of linguistic expressions that will be looked at in the class include: slurs, apologies, 'dog-whistle' speech, propaganda, and implicatures. We will read foundational work in philosophy of language and political philosophy, very broadly construed, in addition to reading accessible recent work in social and political philosophy of language.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND CLASS FORMAT

This class will focus on helping you acquire and develop a deeper understanding of philosophy of language in general along with contemporary work in the field that focuses on political and social language. The evaluations throughout the course – which include a mix of reading responses, quizzes, exams, and essays – reflects the nature of these objectives.

Each class will explore assigned reading(s) through a mixture of lecture and discussion. Each student is required to have done the assigned reading(s) in order to actively participate in the course.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

This class is designed to accommodate a wide variety of students at various levels of background in philosophy of language and political philosophy. This means that no prior background in either of these sub-fields of philosophy is required.

READING SCHEDULE

Lecture 1: What is philosophy of language?

No reading

1. PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

Lecture 2: Meaning part 1

Readings: Elbourne, P. (2011), *Meaning: A slim guide to semantics*, chpt. 1 "Definitions", chpt. 2 "What are word meanings?".

Lecture 3: Meaning part 2

Readings: Grice, H.P. (1957), "Meaning". Davidson, D. (1967), "Truth and Meaning".

Lecture 4: Meaning part 3

Readings: Elbourne, P. (2011), *Meaning: A slim guide to semantics*, chpt. 5 "Semantic properties of sentences", chpt. 6 "Meaning and grammar".

Lecture 5: Meaning part 4

Reading: Elbourne, P. (2011), *Meaning: A slim guide to semantics*, chpt. 7 “Meaning and Context”. Stanley, J. (2005), “Semantics in Context”.

Lecture 6: Pragmatics part 1

Reading: Austin, J.L. excerpts from *How to Do Things with Words*

Lecture 7: Pragmatics part 2

Reading: Grice, H.P. (1975), “Logic and Conversation”

Lecture 8: Pragmatics part 3

Readings: Stalnaker, R. (1973), “Presuppositions”. Stalnaker, R. (1974), “Pragmatic Presuppositions”.

Lecture 9: Pragmatics part 4

Readings: Lewis, D. (1979), “Scorekeeping in a Language Game”. Heim, I. (1983), “On the projection problem for presuppositions”.

2. SUBORDINATING SPEECH

Lecture 10: Pornography part 1

Nancy Bauer, chapters 6 and 7 of *How to Do Things with Pornography*: “What Is to Be Done with Austin?” and “On Philosophical Authority”

Lecture 11: Pornography part 2

Reading: MacKinnon, C. (1993). *Only Words* (excerpts).

Lecture 11: Pornography part 3

Reading: Rae Langton & Caroline West (1999), “Scorekeeping in a pornographic language game”.

Lecture 12: Pornography part 4

Readings: Maitra, I. (2004), “Silence and Responsibility”. Maitra, I. (2009), “Silencing Speech”.

Lecture 13: Pornography part 5

Reading: Maitra, I. and M.K. McGowan. (2007), “The Limits of Free Speech: Pornography and the Question of Coverage.”

3. RACIALLY CHARGED LANGUAGE

Lecture 14: Hate Speech part 1

Reading: Mary Kate McGowan & Ishani Maitra (2009), “On Racist Hate Speech and the Scope of a Free Speech Principle”.

Lecture 15: Hate Speech part 2

Reading: Mary Kate McGowan, (2012) “On ‘Whites Only’ Signs and Racist Hate Speech: Verbal Acts of Racial Discrimination”.

Lecture 16: Stereotyping and Generics part 1
Reading: Sally Haslanger (2011), “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground”.

Lecture 17: Stereotyping and Generics part 2
Reading: Sarah-Jane Leslie (forthcoming) “The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization”

Lecture 18: Slurs part 1
Readings: Luvell Anderson & Ernie Lepore (2011), “Slurring Words”. Elisabeth Camp (2013), “Slurring Perspectives”.

Lecture 19: Slurs part 2
Reading: Robin Jeshion (2013), “Slurs and Stereotypes”

Lecture 20: Slurs part 3
Reading: Renée Jorgensen Bolinger (2015), “The Pragmatics of Slurs”.

4. PROPAGANDA

Lecture 21: Propaganda part 1
Reading: Jason Stanley (2015), Introduction and chapter 1 of *How Propaganda Works*

Lecture 22: Propaganda part 2
Reading: Jason Stanley (2015), chapter 2 of *How Propaganda Works*

Lecture 23: Propaganda part 3
Reading: Jason Stanley (2015), chapter 3 of *How Propaganda Works*

Lecture 24: Propaganda part 4
Reading: Jason Stanley (2015), chapter 4 of *How Propaganda Works*

5. DOGWHISTLES AND APOLOGIES

Lecture 25: Dogwhistles part 1
Reading: Tali Mendelberg, chapter 4 of *The Race Card: “The Political Psychology of Implicit Dogwhistles Communication”*

Lecture 26: Dogwhistles part 2
Readings: Jennifer Saul (ms), “Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language”.

Lecture 27: Apologies part 1
Reading: Danielle Celermajer (2009), chapter 2 of *The Sins of the Nation and the Ritual of Apologies: “Apologies as Speech Acts”*.

Lecture 28: Apologies part 2
Reading: Alice MacLachlan (2015), “‘Trust Me, I’m Sorry’: The Paradox of Public Apology”