

Logic and Language (5AANB011)

1. Module Description

In the wake of the logical revolution at the end of the 19th century, many philosophers well-versed in formal logic turned their attention to the project of understanding natural language. This course will examine how these philosophers attempted to make sense of natural language using the tools of modern logic, and how this project of understanding natural language on the basis of formal languages developed over the course of the 20th century, particularly in response to recalcitrant data like metaphors, slurs, and sarcasm. This module will acquaint students with many classic texts in philosophy of language as well as with some more recent work. By the end of the module, students will be able to demonstrate intellectual, transferable, and practicable skills appropriate to a Level 5 module and in particular will have become familiar with some of the central concepts in philosophy of logic and language. They will also have learned how to relate some of the issues studied in the course to issues in other courses, such as metaphysics and philosophy of mind.

2. Assessment

This module will be assessed via a summative examination consisting of two essay-questions.

3. Secondary Texts

- Michael Devitt and Richard Hanley (eds.), 2006. *The Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language*, Oxford: Blackwell.
- William Lycan, 2008. *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd edn., London: Routledge.
- A.P. Martinich and David Sosa (eds.), 2012. *The Philosophy of Language*, 6th edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Alexander Miller, 2007. *Philosophy of Language*, 2nd edn., London: Routledge.

4. Outline of Weekly Topics and Readings

N.B. This schedule is tentative and is likely to be adjusted as the term progresses. Readings marked with a * are suggested, but not required.

- Week 1
 - Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference”
 - *Gottlob Frege, “Thought”

- Week 2
 - Bertrand Russell, “On Denoting”
 - *David Kaplan, “Reading ‘On Denoting’ at its Centenary”
- Week 3
 - P. F. Strawson, “On Referring”
 - *Bertrand Russell, “Mr. Strawson on Referring”
- Week 4
 - Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1 & 2
- Week 5
 - Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 3
 - *Gareth Evans, “The Causal Theory of Names”
- Week 6
 - H. P. Grice, “Meaning”
 - H. P. Grice, “Logic and Conversation”
 - *J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*
- Week 7
 - Keith Donnellan, “Reference and Definite Descriptions”
 - Saul Kripke, “Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference”
- Week 8
 - Donald Davidson, “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”
 - Marga Reimer, “What Malapropisms Mean: A Reply to Davidson”
- Week 9
 - Christopher Hom, “The Semantics of Racial Epithets”
 - Luvell Anderson and Ernest Lepore, “Slurring Words”
- Week 10
 - Elizabeth Camp, “Sarcasm, Pretense, and the Semantics/Pragmatics Distinction”
 - *Robyn Carston, *Thoughts and Utterances*, Ch. 1

5. Sample Essay Topics

- Explain Frege's notion of sense. Offer what you take to be the best motivation for it. Is this motivation sufficient?
- Explain Russell's theory of descriptions. Introduce what you take to be Strawson's best criticism of this theory. How might Russell defend his theory?
- What does Strawson think that meaning is? How does this relate to his theory of names?
- Explain Kripke's best objection to the Frege-Russell theory of names.
- Explain Donnellan's objection to the Russellian theory of definite descriptions. How does Kripke reply? Is Kripke's response successful?
- What are slurs? How do they work?