

## Advanced Topics in Analytical Philosophy Fall 2015

The course will be concerned with a book manuscript, entitled “Terrestrial Logic: Formal Semantics Brought Down to Earth,” under contract with Oxford University Press, that I co-authored with Vann McGee of MIT. The book aims to show that semantic and referential indeterminacy are rife in natural languages, but that it is nevertheless warranted to employ classical logic in natural languages and theoretically fruitful to provide a formal semantics. We will cover 1 to 2 chapters each week (usually just 1). The chapters, 17 in total, are all short. They range from 7 pages to 16 pages in length single spaced (no chapter is over 10,000 words in length); so the reading will not be at all burdensome. (Occasionally, I’ll suggest and make available background reading.) No logic beyond propositional logic and predicate calculus will be presupposed; although a few of the 17 chapters of the manuscript include technical sections, most of the book is nontechnical. No prior knowledge of any of the philosophical topics that will be discussed will be presupposed. A very wide range of topics will be touched on, including: male pattern baldness, the sorites paradox, colors, the problem of the many, referential indeterminacy, semantic indeterminacy, logical truth, quantification, formal semantics, Tarski’s theory of truth, the aims of truth, disquotational truth, determinate truth, degrees of truth, vagueness, the epistemic approach to vagueness, the semantic approach to vagueness, open-textured concepts, borderline cases, cheap ontology, facts of the matter, propositions, translation, supervenience, supervaluationism, higher-order vagueness, contextualism, classical logic, nonclassical logics, type 1 and type 2 psychological processes, knowledge of one’s mental states, de re thought, and mental representation. The course will end with a discussion of empathy and understanding and how they bear on the earlier topics (male pattern baldness, etc.). [See the list of chapters after **Warning** and **Disclaimer**.]

**Warning!** Vagueness will be a recurring theme. As Michael Tye, channeling Kit Fine, has noted: “the thesis that vagueness is real has spawned a number of deeply perplexing paradoxes and problems. These make vagueness an especially enticing subject into which it is all too easy to wander, curiosity piqued. Unfortunately, it is also quicksand: step into it and you will find yourself gripped. Moreover, once gripped, there is no escape.” **Disclaimer:** You are hereby notified that the instructor, Brian P. McLaughlin, accepts no liability for the intellectual consequences of taking this course.

### *Terrestrial Logic: Formal Semantics Brought Down to Earth*

#### 1. The Sorites Paradox

#### Chapter 1 A Tale of Two ‘therefore’s

#### II. The Logical Argument

#### Chapter 2 What Nonclassical Logics Have to Offer in Response

#### Chapter 3 Celestial Logic in a Terrestrial World

## **Chapter 4 The Intermediate Conclusion**

### **III. The Semantic Argument**

## **Chapter 5 The Semantic Inference**

## **Chapter 6 Paths Forward**

## **Chapter 7 The Final Conclusion**

### **IV. A Prolegomena to Naturalized Formal Semantics**

## **Chapter 8 Tarski's Theory of Truth and 'Tarski's Theory of Truth'**

## **Chapter 9 Boolean Valued Semantics**

## **Chapter 10 Logical Truth**

## **Chapter 11 Everything: its scope and limits**

## **Chapter 12 Determinate Truth**

## **Chapter 13 Higher-Order Vagueness**

### **V. Disquotational Truth**

## **Chapter 14 Is Disquotational Truth Useful?**

## **Chapter 15 The Use of Disquotational Truth in Mathematics**

### **VI. Referential Indeterminacy and *De Re* Thought**

## **Chapter 16 Lessons of the Many**

## **Chapter 17 Empathy and Understanding**