Philosophy 420: Philosophy of Language
Fall 2021
Professor Jeffrey King
jcking310@gmail.com
http://jeffreycking.com
Office Hours: email me to make an appointment for a Zoom meeting

All readings will be available on the Canvas site for the course. On the Canvas site, click the Files link and go to the Readings folder to find the readings. Most readings will be in two e-books: *The Philosophy of Language* A.P. Martinich (ed); *The Frege Reader* Michael Beaney (ed.)

Below readings in *The Frege Reader* are followed by 'B'; readings in *The Philosophy of Language* are followed by 'M'. Any reading not followed by 'M' or 'B' will be posted to Canvas separately.

Module 0: Introduction and Background

Module 1: Weeks 1-3:
Reading: 'On *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*'- Gottlob Frege (B); 'Thought'-Gottlob Frege (B); 'Comments on *Sinn* and *Bedeutung*'—Gottlob Frege (B); 'On Concept and Object'- Gottlob Frege (B)

Topics: Frege's Philosophy of Language: the distinction between names and concept words; concepts and objects; sense and meaning/reference

Module 2: Weeks 4-5:
Reading: 'On Denoting'- Bertrand Russell (M); 'Descriptions'- Bertrand Russell (M)

Topics: Russell's theory of definite descriptions (and denoting phrases generally); differences between Frege and Russell on propositions (thoughts) and definite descriptions; the "Frege-Russell" theory of names

Module 3: Weeks 6-10:
Reading: (excerpts from) *Naming and Necessity*—Saul Kripke (M); 'The Causal Theory of Names'—Gareth Evans (M); 'Proper Names, propositional attitudes and non-descriptive connotations'—Diana Ackerman

Topics: criticisms of the "descriptive" theory of names; the "causal" theory of names

(first paper assigned October 13 and due October 20)

Module 4: Weeks 11-13:
Reading: 'Logic and Conversation'—Paul Grice (M); 'File Change Semantics and the Familiarity Theory of Definiteness'—Irene Heim

Topics: Classical pragmatics and dynamic semantics

(second paper assigned November 15 due November 22)

Take home final exam assigned December 13 and due Decemeber 20.

All papers and exams are to be submitted electronically to our Canvas site.

GENERAL REMARKS: The material we will be reading in this course is extremely difficult. The reason I am having you read relatively few pages per week is that I expect you to read the selections very carefully and **MANY** times. I believe you will find that you cannot do well in this course without reading the selections carefully over and over. The good news is that doing so is the best preparation for writing the papers I will assign. If you have read the selections over and over and have followed the lectures, you should be well situated when papers are assigned.

I suggest that you make your own copies of reading materials because I will often refer to specific passages in lectures and so it will be important to have all readings that might be under discussion in a given lecture.

LAST WORD: As I've tried to indicate, to succeed in this course, you will have to read extremely difficult material slowly and carefully many times. You will have to write papers critically explaining and discussing this material. The standards of precision for good papers in this class are likely to be considerably higher than you are used to. If that doesn't sound good to you, this class is not for you. I'm not trying to scare anybody off; it's just truth in advertising!

GRADING:

Two 5-7 page papers 66.67% (33.33% each)
Take home final examination 33.33%

Each assignment will be given a numerical grade between 0 and 100. These translsate into letter grades as follows:

A 90-100
B+ 85-89
B 80-84
C+ 75-79
C 70-74
D 60-69
F below 60

Your grade will be calculated by adding the numerical grades for the three assignments and dividing by three. The resulting number will be turned into a letter grade in accordance with the above.

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form.

Full disability policies and procedures are at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/

TWO FINAL NOTES:

1) Papers turned in late without prior approval will be graded down 1/2 grade for each day they are late; final exams turned in after the day and time they are due without prior approval will not be accepted and you will be given a grade of 'F' for your exam.

2) Because of the dramatic increase in cases of plagiarism over the last several years, my current policy is to refer, immediately and without question or comment, all cases of suspected plagiarism to the office of student conduct!

Information on plagiarism, academic integrity etc. here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu

Learning goals for this course:

(1) develop in students the critical skills necessary for evaluating ideas and arguments

(2) develop the ability to construct coherent arguments in support of one's views

(3) develop the ability to present accurately and fairly views that differ from one's own

(4) develop the ability to write clearly and in an organized manner.