

Philosophy 420: Philosophy of Language

Fall 2018

Professor Jeffrey King

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Office Hours: Tu 1-2; 515 Gateway Transit Village (106 Somerset)

All readings will be available on the Sakai site for the course. 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 Sakai separately.

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

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

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)

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 December 20.

All papers and exams are to be submitted electronically to our Sakai 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.

We will talk about the readings in excruciating detail. I expect you to show up for class sessions with the appropriate readings read, ready to talk about them. This, of course, does not mean I expect you to have fully understood what you read. I am quite sympathetic to students who have trouble understanding the stuff (it's hard!!); but I am unsympathetic to students who haven't read the stuff carefully. I suggest that you make your own copies of reading materials because we will often refer to specific passages in class and so it will be important to bring all readings that might be under discussion to class. In general, class sessions will be a combination of lecture and discussion.

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%

In the case of borderline grades, performance in class will be taken into account.

Students are expected to attend all classes; if you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An email is automatically sent to me.

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>