

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
GRADUATE COURSE OUTLINE 2009-2010**

Philosophy 9451: Philosophy and Linguistics

**Winter Term 2010
Tuesdays 12:30-3:30
TC 310**

**Instructors: Robert Stainton & Ileana Paul
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This seminar will cover philosophy *and* linguistics as well as philosophy *of* linguistics. That is, it will address issues at the intersection of the two disciplines, as well as philosophical foundations of contemporary theoretical (broadly generative) linguistics.

The seminar will begin with a brief introduction to linguistics in the generative tradition. We will read both an introductory textbook and a series of essays by Noam Chomsky. Having arrived at some sense of what linguistics is, we will then consider in more detail philosophical issues about the discipline. Taking off from the Chomsky essays, this “philosophical foundations” section will focus on ontological and epistemological issues: What is the ontological status of natural languages, material, mental or abstract? What do facts about natural languages supervene upon? Given the answers to the foregoing, what are the proper methods for investigating natural languages? The seminar will culminate in a component on intersections: “case studies”, drawn from Ray Jackendoff’s recent work, in which philosophy and generative linguistics overlap. The topics will likely include the contribution of linguistics to theories of mental computation and representation, consciousness, action and social cognition.

Of interest to graduate students in both the linguistics and philosophy graduate programs, the course will not presuppose detailed knowledge of either discipline.

TEXTS

Daniela Isac and Charles Reiss (2008). *I-Language: An Introduction to Linguistics as Cognitive Science*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Noam Chomsky (2000). *New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Peter Ludlow (forthcoming). *Philosophical Issues in Generative Linguistics*. Oxford University Press.

Ray Jackendoff (2007). *Language, Culture and Consciousness*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

REQUIREMENTS

In-Class Participation: 10%

“Briefing Notes” on Selected Philosophical Readings: 20%

Problem Sets in Linguistics: 20%

Seminar Presentation: 20%

Short Essay: 30%

- *Participation*: The course will be run as a seminar. It is thus crucial that all students be present, well-prepared and taking part. This is why there is a participation grade.
- *Briefing Notes*: At the outset of the relevant classes, students will hand in two to four pages of typewritten notes on the chapter assigned. (500-1000 words is appropriate.) These “briefing notes” will consist of two parts: an outline of the main argument being made (which is not necessarily an outline of the paper), and some critical questions and comments.
- *Problem Sets*: Homework exercises will be assigned as appropriate, to help students more fully grasp the material from linguistics.
- *Presentation*: Students will be required to lead discussion of one seminar topic. This need not involve anything as formal as a lecture or “PowerPoint” presentation. However, the presenter will be expected not only to explain the structure of the reading and any unfamiliar concepts, but also to provide additional necessary background that cannot be gleaned from the readings themselves.
- *Essay*: The paper should be the sort of thing one could submit to a graduate conference – ideally about 12 pages in length, definitely not more than 14 pages. It may be either more empirical or more philosophical, depending upon the interests and background of the student.

OUTLINE

- I. Preliminaries
- II. Introduction to Generative Linguistics
- III. Philosophy of Linguistics
 - A. The Object of Inquiry
 - B. Methodological Issues
- III. Philosophy and Linguistics: Cases Studies at the Intersection
 - A. Mental Computation and Representation
 - B. Consciousness
 - C. Action
 - D. Social Cognition

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes. Audits must be declared by the end of the first month of the term as indicated by the completion and submission of the required form:

<http://www.grad.uwo.ca/documentation/Grad%20Course%20Audit%20form.pdf>

Incompletes are granted at the *exclusive* discretion of the Graduate Program Chair, and only on the basis of documented medical or compassionate grounds. If, during the course, you envisage any difficulty completing all the required work by the completion deadline, consult immediately with the instructor *and* the Graduate Program Chair.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is unacknowledged copying or paraphrasing of words or ideas of another person. Whenever students take an idea or a passage of text from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

The University of Western Ontario uses software for plagiarism checking. Students may be required to submit their written work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.