

Fall 2026

PHILOSOP 4991F/9400L: Philosophy of Language

AREA: M&L

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introductory survey of theories of linguistic meaning, drawing principally on classic articles in Analytic philosophy of language which have served as a foundation. Topics will include: reference, truth conditions and possible worlds; assertions and other speech acts; speakers' reference; conversational implicature; metaphor; indexicals and demonstratives; pragmatic determinants of what is said.

Authors may include: J.L. Austin, Emma Borg, Robyn Carston, Donald Davidson, Keith Donnellan, H. Paul Grice, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, John Searle, Dan Sperber & Deirdre Wilson, and Catherine Wearing.

The main objectives are to fine-tune students' skills as linguists and philosophers, and to introduce key concepts, positions and arguments in semantics/pragmatics. The focus, as noted, will be on philosophical foundations.

To make these objectives achievable, students should have a background in at least one of philosophy or linguistics. It is not required that students have both, but it would be extremely difficult for a student with background in neither to master the skills and information in play.