

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Course Outline**

**Phil 4210G/Phil 9614B/Ling 9453B  
“Survey of Philosophy of Language”**

**Winter Term 2019**

**Instructor:** Robert J. Stainton

**Class Days and Hours:** Tu 2:30-5:30

**Office:** StH 3126

**Office Hours:** Tu 1:00-2:00

**Classroom:** StH 1140 [Tentative]

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**DESCRIPTION**

A survey of foundational and highly influential texts in Analytic Philosophy of Language. Emphasis will be on three topics: contrasting conceptions of linguistic meaning; the semantics-pragmatics boundary; and two case studies (namely, definite descriptions and metaphor).

**TEXTS**

Required: Maite Ezcurdia & Robert J. Stainton (eds.)(2013). *The Semantics-Pragmatics Boundary in Philosophy*. Broadview Press.

Recommended for “newbies”: Robert J. Stainton (1996). *Philosophical Perspectives on Language*. Broadview Press.

**OBJECTIVES**

The twin objectives are honing of philosophical skills and enriching students’ familiarity with some “touchstone” material in contemporary Analytic Philosophy of Language. In terms of skills, the emphasis will be on: professional-level philosophical writing; close reading of notoriously challenging texts; methodological reflection; and respectful but incisive philosophical dialogue.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

Six “Briefing Notes”: 50%

- On the day they are discussed in class, students will submit 2-3 page (i.e., 750-1000 words) “reader responses” to selected writings, consisting of an outline of the central *argument*, along with the student’s comments and questions. (This is to be sharply contrasted with an outline of the *paper*, section-by-section.)
- Each Briefing Note is worth 10%, and all are obligatory. However, the lowest grade will be dropped

Glossary: 15%  
Final Exam: 25%  
Class Participation: 10%

## **COURSE READINGS**

### **I. Four Approaches to Meaning**

#### *A. Reference and Truth Conditions*

Gottlob Frege (1892), "On Sense and Reference"

Bertrand Russell (1919), "Descriptions"

[Not reprinted in textbook]

#### *B. Use Theory*

J.L. Austin (1956), "Performative Utterances"

Peter F. Strawson (1950), "On Referring"

#### *C. Dynamic Semantics*

Robert C. Stalnaker (1978), "Assertion"

David Lewis (1979), "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"

#### *D. Mentalistic Semantics*

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson (1987), "Précis of *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*"

### **II. The Semantics-Pragmatics Boundary**

#### *A. Foundations*

H. Paul Grice (1967/1975), "Logic and Conversation"

#### *B. Indexicals*

David Kaplan, "Demonstratives" and "Afterthoughts", (1977/1989)

#### *C. Pragmatic Determinants of Literal Truth Conditions*

John Perry (1986), "Thought without Representation"

John R. Searle (1978), "Literal Meaning"

Robyn Carston (1988), "Implicature, Explicature, and Truth-Theoretic Semantics"

Emma Borg (2007), "Minimalism versus Contextualism in Semantics"

### **III. Two Case Studies**

#### *A. Definite Descriptions Revisited*

Keith S. Donnellan (1966), "Reference and Definite Descriptions"

Saul Kripke (1977), "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"

#### *B. Metaphor*

John R. Searle (1979), "Metaphor"

Donald Davidson (1978), “What Metaphors Mean”  
Catherine Wearing, “Metaphor and What Is Said” (2006)

### **AUDIT**

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at [http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>  
Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdwweb/?cmd=login>  
Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>  
Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning (519) 661-3030 (during class

hours) or (519) 433-2023 after class hours and on weekends.