The University of Western Ontario
Department of Philosophy

Philosophy: 225F
Introduction to the Philosophy of Language

Instructor: Robert J. Stainton **Office Hours**: Th 2:30-3:30
Class Days and Hours: Tu 4-6, Th 4-5 in TC203 **Email**: rstainto@uwo.ca
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Students are responsible for following the Philosophy Department procedures included with this outline.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
The course is structured historically. We will begin with "the really old" philosophy of language, focusing on Plato. We then consider "the oldish" philosophy of language of the 19th and 20th centuries, reading Frege, Russell, and contemporary Anglo-American authors. We conclude with "the new philosophy of language", an emerging synthesis of traditional approaches with the results and methods of the cognitive sciences.

Along the way, the course introduces some of the central topics in the study of language as pursued by philosophers, classical and contemporary, and cognitive scientists. The focal topics this term will be:
• The nature of human language, and how it differs from other systems of communication;
• The relations between language, thought, and communication;
• Theories of meaning for words and sentences;
• The semantics-pragmatics boundary;
• What the evidence-base for such inquiry is, and what methodologies are appropriate for studying language, thought and communication.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
Plato (1999) *Cratylus*. Translated by C.D.C. Reeve. Hackett. [ISBN 0-87220-416-2]

R.J. Stainton (ed.)(2000) *Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language: A Concise Anthology.* Broadview Press. [ISBN 1-55111-253-1]

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:
Critical Outline of a Reading: 25% (due October 12, in class)
Essay: 35% (due November 30, in class)
Exam: 40%

Note: Papers handed in late will receive a penalty of half a letter grade per day.

COURSE OUTLINE

Part One: Introduction
I. Terminology and our questions

II. The *Really Old* Philosophy of Language: Plato
  - Plato *Cratylus,* pp. 1-24
  - Plato, *Cratylus,* pp. 65-95

Part Two: The "Oldish" Philosophy of Language -- 19th and 20th Centuries
III. Systems and Things
  A. Direct Reference
    - Russell, "Descriptions", pp. 65-74.
  B. Mediated Reference
    - Frege, "Ueber Sinn und Bedeutung", pp.45-64
  C. Direct Reference Strikes Back
    - Davidson, "Truth and Meaning", pp. 75-92
    - Kripke, "Identity and Necessity", pp. 93-121

IV. A Complication for the Systems and Things Approach: Pragmatics
  A. Conversational Implicature
    - Grice, "Logic and Conversation", pp.271-288
  B. Referential-Attributive
    - Strawson, "On Referring", pp.289-312
    - Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions", pp.313-332
  C. Metaphor
    - Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean", pp. 333-350

V. Two Alternatives to Systems and Things: Ideas and Uses
  A. The Idea Theory of Meaning
    - Mental Images
    - Intentions
        - Grice, "Meaning", pp. 127-136
  B. The Use Theory of Meaning
    - Strawson, "On Referring", pp. 289-312 [Review]
    - Austin, "Performative Utterances", pp. 239-252
    - Searle, "What is a speech act?", pp. 253-268

Part Three: The New Philosophy of Language
  A. The View from Modern Linguistics
    - Nativism
    - Expanding the evidence-base
  B. Contemporary Mentalism
    - Chomsky, "Knowledge of Language", pp. 3-44
  C. A Contemporary Take on the Idea Theory of Meaning
    - Fodor, "Propositional Attitudes", pp. 137-162
  D. Synthesis: System, Knowledge and Use

THIS OUTLINE SUBJECT TO CHANGE, GIVEN SUFFICIENT PRIOR NOTICE.
You are responsible for ensuring that you have successfully completed all course prerequisites and that you have not taken an anti-requisite course. Lack of prerequisites may not be used as basis of appeal. If you are not eligible for a course, you may be removed from it at any time, and you will receive no fee adjustment. These decisions cannot be appealed.