Phil 210: Philosophy of Language

August 23, 2012

Instructor: Carlotta Pavese.

Time: 3.55-5.15pm, Mondays and Wednesdays.

Place: Classroom 205, Hickman Hall. Address: 89 George St, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

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Office Hours: 11.30am-1pm, Mondays and Wednesdays.

Course Description: Humans have a remarkable ability to create and use symbolic objects like money, maps and pictures. But what is it that makes an object *symbolic*? How can an object signify something 'beyond' itself? How can an object have a *meaning*?

In this class, we will focus on one particular system of symbolic objects: *the human language*. While there are many other kinds of symbols, words and sentences are perhaps the most characteristic, impressive and intricate examples. Accordingly, studying the symbolic nature of language provides a good testing ground for attempts to answer our questions about symbolic objects. Here are a few things we will look at: We will start with the distinction between natural and conventional meaning; we will then look at how philosophers have conceived of human language on the model of *formalized* languages; we will look at different conceptions of meanings; and we will try to understand the conventional nature of the meaning expressed by languages.

In this course you will read the most important works in the philosophical study of language and acquire the skills and background necessary to understand it. This skill-set and background will be drawn from work in logic, linguistics, and philosophy, but the only prerequisite is Phil 201 (Intro Logic). Two classes will be devoted to reviewing the main logical concepts that students need to acquire to follow the material. Classes will have a lecture format, but will allow ample time for questions and discussion. The lectures will involve focused discussion of specific problems and will connect with the readings by considering how they contribute to the development of solutions to those problems. Some of the readings are very difficult. One of the goals of this course is to acquire the skills to go through very hard philosophical readings and understand most of them. So don't get discourage if you are having an hard time understanding some or even all of the readings. They *are* difficult. If you don't find them difficult, you are not putting enough effort at understanding them. However, if you work hard through the semester, I assure you will learn a lot.

Textbook and Readings I highly recommend bringing your text(s) to class with you.

Mandatory:
Martinich [15] *The Philosophy of Language*. 5th edn., New York: Oxford University Press.

Optional:
Lycan [14], *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction. 2nd edn., New York: Routledge.

Miller [16], *Philosophy of Language*, 2nd edn., Ithaca, NY: McGill-Queens University Press.

Other Readings: Important: Some of the readings aren't in the mandatory textbook. All such readings will be available electronically on the course's Sakai site. I recommending printing these out and bringing them to class.

Advice on Reading: It is more important to have a basic grasp of the overall point of a reading than to understand any particular detail. Accordingly, I advise you to do each of the readings once quickly in a single sitting and then return to the details you missed. If, on a second reading, you can't sort out some specific detail, write down what you don't understand and bring it to class for discussion. Do your best to raise your question at a point in the class where that detail is relevant to what's being discussed. It is much more likely that you will get a satisfying answer if you ask your question at the appropriate time. In all the readings, it will be helpful to ask yourself 'what is the problem or issue at stake here?' and then 'what solutions or positions is the author arguing for here?'.

Grading: 75%: 3 Exams (Exam 1: 25%, Exam 2: 25%, Exam 3: 25%). See the schedule for the exam days.

All 3 exams will require you to answer 3 short-answer essay questions. Each exam will present you with 3 pairs of questions and you will have to select one from each pair to answer; all the answers will have to be completed in-class. Prior to each exam I will post 12 study-questions on Sakai. The 6 exam questions will be among these study questions. The exams will be non-cumulative, but there is a good deal of interdependence in the course material, so it may be necessary to revisit old notes and texts in studying for an exam.
25%: 5 Pop Quizzes (5% each)

The pop quizzes will be given in class on *unannounced* days, often in the first 15 minutes. This is a large incentive to come to class and be on time. The pop quizzes will ask you to answer basic questions about the assigned reading or lecture for *that* day and how it relates to recent readings and lectures. Clearly, *you must do the readings to do well on the quizzes, and you must do well on the quizzes to do well in the class!*

Policy on Absences: If you miss a quiz or an exam and want to make it up, you will need a Dean's Note to excuse your absence. This is just the official University policy. In all but the most extreme cases, you will be required to make up the missed quiz or exam within 10 days. You have up to *three* excused absences during the semester. If you need more absences, you will need a Dean's note.

Academic Integrity: In this course we will strictly adhere to the University Policy on Academic Integrity. If you are not familiar with it, view it at:

http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/integrity.shtml

Any violation of this policy will be reported immediately to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. Violations will, at the very least, result in an F on the assignment in question, but are also likely to lead to an F in the class, suspension and other penalties.

Schedule

1st week:

When: 7th September Wednesday;
Readings: None.
Topic: We will go over the Syllabus.

When: 8th September Thursday;
Readings: Grice [9].
Topic: Natural Meaning versus Conventional Meaning. Symbols. Degrees of Conventionality.

2nd week:

When: 12th September monday;
Readings: Selection of Barwise&Etchemendy[1].
Topic: Review Logic. Propositional Language/syntax and Semantics.

When: 14th September wednesday;
Readings: Selection of Barwise&Etchemendy[1].
Topic: Review Logic. First order Language/ Syntax. Name- predicate- Sentences.

3rd week:

When: 19th September monday;
Reading: Frege [5].
Topic: Frege: Sense and Reference. (**First Pop Quiz.**)

When: 21st September wednesday;
Reading: Frege [7].
Topic: Language and Logic. Concept and object.

4th week:

When: 26th September monday;

Reading: Frege [6].
Topic: Language and Logic. Frege: Thought.

When: 28th September wednesday;
Reading: Russell [21].
Topic: Language and Logic. Russell's theory of definite descriptions.

5th week:

When: 3rd October;
Reading: Tarski [22].
Topic: Meaning as truth conditions: Tarski, Davidson and Montague. .

When: 5th October;
Reading: Davidson [3].
Topic: idem. **Second Pop Quiz**

6th week:

When: 10th October;
Reading: Putnam [18].
Topic: Externalism about Meaning: Putnam and Kripke.

When: 12th October;
Reading: none.
Topic: **First Exam**.

7th week:

When: 17th October;
Reading: Selection of Brandom [2].
Topic: Inferential role semantics. Dummett. Brandom.

When:19th October;
Reading: Fodor [4].
Topic: Problem with inferential role semantics. **Third Pop Quiz**

8th week:

When: 24th October;
Reading: Chomsky.
Topic: Syntax and Semantics.

When: 26th October;

Reading: Chomsky.
Topic: Linguistics.

9th week:

When: 31st October;
Reading: Kripke [11]
Topic: The Semantics of propositional attitude ascriptions. Kripke's puzzle about belief. **Fourth Pop Quiz**

When: 2nd November;
Reading: Perry [17].
Topic: Kaplan, Perry.

10th week:

When: 7th November;
Reading: Quine [19].
Topic: Skepticism about meaning, Part I: Indeterminacy.

When: 9th November;
Reading: Kripke [10].
Topic: Skepticism about meaning, Part II: Wittgenstein's rule following.

11th week:

When:14th November;
Reading: None.
Topic: **Second Exam**.

When: 16th November;
Reading: Quine [20].
Topic: Analyticity.

12th week:

When: 21st November;
Reading: My notes.
Topic: Introduction to Game Theory and Coordination.

When: 23rd November.
Reading: None.
Topic: no class, happy thanksgiving!!

13th week:

> *When*: 28th November;
> *Reading*: Lewis [13].
> *Topic*: Conventions. **Fifth Pop Quiz**

> *When*: 30th November;
> *Reading*: Selection of Lewis [12].
> *Topic*: Lewis's response to Quine.

14th week:

> *When*: 5th December;
> *Reading*: Grice [8].
> *Topic*: semantics/pragmatics. Implicatures.

> *When*: 7th December;
> *Reading*: My notes on Stalnaker's and Lewis' views on context.
> *Topic*: Stalnaker and Lewis on context.

15th week:

> *When*: 12th December
> *Reading*: None.
> *Topic*: Last day of classes. **Third Exam**.

References

[1] BARWISE, J., AND ETCHEMENDY, J. *Language, Proof, and Logic, New edn.* CSLI Publications, Stanford, California, 2003.

[2] BRANDOM, R. *Articulating Reasons: An Introduction to Inferentialism*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 2000.

[3] DAVIDSON, D. Truth and meaning. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[4] FODOR, J., AND LEPORE, E. Why meaning (probably) isn't conceptual role. *Mind Language 6:4* (1991), 328–343.

[5] FREGE, G. Sense and reference. *Philosophical Review 57.3* (1948), 209–30.

[6] FREGE, G. The thought: A logical inquiry. *Mind LXV* (1956), 289–311.

[7] FREGE, G. 'on concept and object. In *The Frege Reader, Beaney, M (ed)*. Blackwell Publishers, New York, 1997, pp. 181–193.

[8] GRICE, H. Logic and conversation. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[9] GRICE, H. 'meaning. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[10] KRIPKE, S. On rules and private language. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

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[12] LEWIS, D. *Conventions: A philosophical Study*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1969.

[13] LEWIS, D. Language and languages. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

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[15] MARTINICH, A. *The Philosophy of Language*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[16] MILLER, G. Some comments on competence and performance. *Annals New York Academy of Science*.

[17] PERRY, J. The problem of essential indexical. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

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[19] QUINE, W. Translation and meaning. In *The philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. 1960.

[20] QUINE, W. Two dogmas of empiricism. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[21] RUSSELL, B. On denoting. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.

[22] TARSKI, A. The semantic conception of truth. In *The Philosophy of Language, Martinich (ed)*. Oxford University Press, New York, 2006.