

# Philosophy 3300/5300: Philosophy of Language

Winter 2012  
W 15:35-18:25  
McCain 2118

How is it possible for this string of marks to ask you a question? What is it for a word to have a meaning? Is the meaning of a word an idea that you associate with it? Is it the objects in the world that it picks out? Is it an abstract "object" of some kind? What is the relationship between language and the world? Between words and sentences? Between what I mean and what I say? Between saying and acting? Between what I say and what you understand? Between meaning and linguistic use? Between meaning and behaviour? Between meaning and truth? Is there any fact of the matter about what a linguistic expression means? Is there any such thing as linguistic meaning at all?

This introduction to some major themes in the Philosophy of Language will explore answers to these questions and others, focusing on the work of such figures as Locke, Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Carnap, Quine, Chomsky, Austin, Hornsby, Langton, Searle, and Davidson.

Instructor: Dr. Michael Hymers <Michael.Hymers@Dal.Ca>, McCain 3129, tel.: 494-3548  
(Office Hours: MF 1:30-2:30pm or by appointment)

Prerequisite: Two full credits in Philosophy including logic, or permission of the instructor.

## Required Texts:

- Robert Martin, *The Meaning of Language* (MIT, 1986).
- Robert Stainton (ed.), *Perspectives in the Philosophy of Language* (Broadview, 2000).
- Additional readings available for photocopying from a black binder in the Philosophy Department and on the Blackboard Learning System (OWL).

## Further Required Text for Graduate Students:

- Alexander Miller, *Philosophy of Language*, 2nd ed. (McGill-Queen's, 2007).

## Recommended Text for Undergraduates:

- Alexander Miller, *Philosophy of Language*, 2nd ed. (McGill-Queen's, 2007).

## Evaluation:

### Undergraduates:

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| Weekly Short Assignments (250-500 words each):  | 40% |
| <u>Best 4 to 8</u> , depending on class attendance. (See below.) At least two of those to be counted must be done by February 29. |     |
| One essay (2500-3000 words) due April 16 :  | 60% |

### Graduates:

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| Short Assignments (250-500 wds each) – best 8:                   | 40% |
| Two of these are to be presented to the class as short seminars. |     |
| One essay (4000-5000 wds) due April 16:                          | 60% |

Term-work will be assigned a numerical mark, which will be converted to a letter-grade at the end of the term.

#### Approximate Grading Scale

Grade	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D	F
/100	100-90	89-85	84-80	79-77	76-73	72-69	68-65	64-61	60-57	56-50	49-0

Late Work: Late work will be penalized 5% per working day up to a maximum of seven days, after which it will not be accepted.

Plagiarism: Please attend to the following excerpt from the Dalhousie Calendar:<sup>1</sup>

Dalhousie University defines plagiarism as the presentation of the work of another author in such a way as to give one's reader reason to think it to be one's own. Plagiarism is a form of academic fraud.

Plagiarism is considered a serious academic offence which may lead to the assignment of a failing grade, suspension or expulsion from the University, or even the withdrawal of a degree previously awarded. Some examples of plagiarism are:

- the use of a paper purchased from a commercial research corporation or prepared by any person other than the individual claiming to be the author;
- copying, without giving credit to the author, from another's published or non-published works, another's computer codes/programmes, another's artistic or architectural works, another's scientific project, including material found on the internet;

The University attaches great importance to the contribution of original thought to learning and scholarship. It attaches equal importance to the appropriate acknowledgement of sources from which facts and opinions have been obtained.

The proper use of footnotes and other methods of acknowledgement vary from one field of study to another. Failure to cite sources as required in the particular field of study in the preparation of essays, term papers and dissertations or theses may, in some cases, be considered to be plagiarism.

Students who are in any doubt about how to acknowledge sources should discuss the matter in advance with the faculty members for whom they are preparing assignments. In many academic departments, written statements on matters of this kind are made available as a matter of routine or can be obtained on request.

Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and will be dealt with severely in this course. "Severely" means severely. If I find evidence of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty on any of your papers, I am required by the University to report it to the Academic Integrity Officer, and I will do so. If that happens, I will not be allowed to discuss the matter with you, and you will not receive a mark for the work in question until after the case has been reviewed.

The Class: There will be weekly reading-assignments. You should bring your text to class and be prepared to discuss the material covered. Short, weekly writing-assignments (see "Evaluation") will be due in class each week (unless otherwise indicated).

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<sup>1</sup> Go directly to <<http://www.registrar.dal.ca/calendar/ug/UREG.htm#12>> or <<http://www.registrar.dal.ca/calendar/ug/UREG.htm>> and click on <Intellectual Honesty>.

Weekly Assignments: Each weekly assignment will pertain to the readings for week in which the assignment is due. For graduate students I shall count the best eight. For undergraduates I shall count the best four to eight, depending on class attendance, according to the following (ingenious) formula:

Classes Attended	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
# of Assignments required	4	4	4	5	5	5	6	6	6	7	7	8	8

If you miss three consecutive classes, that will further increase the number of assignments required by 1 (to a maximum of 8). At least two of the assignments to be counted must be completed by February 29.

OSAA Syllabus Statement on Accommodation:

Students may request accommodation as a result of barriers related to disability, religious obligation, or any characteristic under the Nova Scotia Human Rights Act. Students who require academic accommodation for either classroom participation or the writing of tests, quizzes and exams should make their request to the Office of Student Accessibility & Accommodation (OSAA) prior to or at the outset of each academic term (with the exception of X/Y courses). Please see <[www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca](http://www.studentaccessibility.dal.ca)> for more information and to obtain Form A: Request for Accommodation.

A note taker may be required to assist a classmate. There is an honorarium of \$75/course/term. If you are interested, please contact OSAA at 494-2836 for more information.

Please note that your classroom may contain specialized accessible furniture and equipment. It is important that these items remain in the classroom so that students who require their usage will be able to participate in the class.

Troubles? If you are having problems with the course, please see me.

Tentative Schedule of Readings and Assignments  
(Subject to Change)

\*=PDF on the BLS site/photocopy in the department  
%=other electronic versions

	Introduction: Problems in the Philosophy of Language	
January 4	Reading: Martin, Chapter 1 "The Structure of Language"	
	Meanings and Ideas	
January 11	Readings: %Locke, An Essay concerning Human Understanding, Book III, Chapters I-III Martin, Chapter 2, "Meanings as Ideas"	

	Frege: Sense and Reference	
January 18	<p>Readings:  Martin, Chapter 11, "Function and Object"  Frege, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung" (Stainton, 45-65)  Martin, Chapter 14, "Extensionality"  Martin, Chapter 19, "Sense and Reference"</p>	<p>Recommended:  *Frege, "Concept and Object"  *Frege, "Function and Concept"  *Frege, "The Thought"  Miller, Chapter 1 "Frege: semantic value and reference"  Miller, Chapter 2 "Frege and Russell: sense and definite descriptions," §§2.1-2.7</p>
	Russell: The Theory of Descriptions	
January 25	<p>Readings:  Martin, Chapter 12, "Quantifiers"  Martin, Chapter 13, "Definite Descriptions"  *Russell, "The Philosophy of Logical Atomism,"  Lecture VI ("Descriptions and Incomplete Symbols")  Russell, "Descriptions" (Stainton, 65-74)</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 2 "Frege and Russell: sense and definite descriptions," §§2.8-2.11  *Russell, "On Denoting"</p>
	Proper Names	
February 1	<p>Readings:  Martin, Chapter 14, "Extensionality"  Martin, Chapter 15, "Modal Contexts and Possible Worlds"  Martin, Chapter 16, "Proper Names"  Martin, Chapter 17, "More on Proper Names and Definite Descriptions"  *Searle, "Proper Names"  Kripke, "Identity and Necessity" (Stainton, 93-121)</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 2 "Frege and Russell: sense and definite descriptions," §§2.12-2.13  *Searle, "Proper Names and Intentionality"</p>
	The Early Wittgenstein	
February 8	<p>Readings:  *Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, §§1-3.263; 4-4.31; 5, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3-5.32; 5.5-5.5521.  *Hymers, Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy, Chapter 2, Chapter 3, §§3.1-3.4</p>	<p>Recommended:  Martin, Chapter 14, "Extensionality"  NSLC, A stiff drink.  #Anthony Kenny, Wittgenstein</p>
	The Verification Theory of Meaning	
February 15	<p>Readings:  *Carnap, "The Elimination of Metaphysics ..."  Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" (Stainton, 189-210; esp. Sections 5 &amp; 6)  *Hymers, Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy, Chapter 1, §§1.6-1.7</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 3, "Sense and verificationism: logical positivism"  Miller, Chapter 4, "Scepticism about sense (I): Quine on analyticity and translation", §§4.1-4.5</p>
February 22	Reading Week – No Class	
	The Later Wittgenstein	
February 29	<p>Readings:  Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, selections (Stainton, 211-232)  *Hymers, Wittgenstein and the Practice of Philosophy, §§5.1-5.7  Martin, Chapter 4, "Going on in the Same Way"  Martin, Chapter 5, "The Private Language Argument"</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 5, "Scepticism about sense (II): Kripke's Wittgenstein's sceptical paradox"  Miller, Chapter 6, "Saving sense: responses to the sceptical paradox"  *Millikan, "Truth Rules, Hoverflies and the Kripke-Wittgenstein Paradox"  *Fodor, Psychosemantics, Chapter 4  Martin, Chapter 7, "Rules"</p>

	The Indeterminacy of Translation	
March 7	<p>Readings:  *Quine, Word and Object, Chapter 2, "Translation and Meaning"  Martin, Chapter 6, "Radical Translation"  *Chomsky, "Quine's Empirical Assumptions"  *Hymers, "Indeterminacy, Semantic"</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 4, "Scepticism about sense (I): Quine on analyticity and translation", §§4.6-4.10  *Hockney, "The Bifurcation of Scientific Theories and the Indeterminacy of Translation"</p>
	Innateness Hypotheses	
March 14	<p>Readings:  Martin, Chapter 3, "Innateness"  *Stainton, "Knowledge Issues", Section 1  *Chomsky, "Recent Contributions to the Theory of Innate Ideas"  Chomsky, "Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use" (Stainton, 3-44; esp. 3-23)  *Lee-Lampshire, "The Foundation Walls that are Carried by the House: A Critique of the Poverty of Stimulus Thesis and a Wittgensteinian- Dennettian Alternative"</p>	<p>Recommended:  #Quine, "Linguistics and Philosophy"  *Hook, "Empiricism, Rationalism, and Innate Ideas"  *Chomsky, New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind, Chapter 1  *McGilvray, Chomsky, Chapter 3  Martin, Chapter 10, "Animal and Machine Language"</p>
	Speech Acts, Performatives, and Non-Natural Meaning	
March 21	<p>Readings:  Martin, Chapter 8, "Conventions"  Martin, Chapter 9, "Speech Acts"  Austin, "Performative Utterances" (Stainton, 239-252)  *Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," Philosophy and Public Affairs 22 (1993): 293-330</p>	<p>Recommended:  *Bird, "Illocutionary Silencing"  Grice, "Meaning" (Stainton, 127-136)  Miller, Chapter 7, "Sense, intention and speech acts: Grice's programme"  Searle, "What Is a Speech Act?" (Stainton, 253-268) + *Searle, Speech Acts, 46-50</p>
	Meaning and Truth	
March 28	<p>Readings:  Davidson, "Truth and Meaning" (Stainton, 75-92)  *Hymers, "Radical Translation, Radical Interpretation, and Interpretationalism"  Martin, Chapter 22, "Truth and Meaning"</p>	<p>Recommended:  Miller, Chapter 8, "Sense and truth: Tarski and Davidson"  *Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth"  Martin, Chapter 14, "Extensionality"</p>
	Metaphor	
April 4	<p>Readings:  *Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean"  *Richard Rorty, "Hesse and Davidson on Metaphor"  *Mary Hesse, "Tropical Talk: The Myth of the Literal"</p>	<p>Recommended:  *Hymers, "Metaphor, Cognitivity, and Meaning-Holism"  *Mercer, "Metaphor and Sentence Meaning"</p>