Philosophy of Language

Shaughan Lavine

Phil/Lang/COGS 4/563

308 César E Chavez Building

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 11:00 A.M.–11:50 A.M.

Syllabus

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Register

You will be required to submit comments and questions on the reading on the course wiki. The appropriate linked pages will not be accessible until you have registered for the wiki and I have manually added you to the class list. It is only possible to register using your arizona.edu email address. Do it now!

A syllabus may be viewed by the University as a document that in certain circumstances may have contractual force. Faculty members have therefore been requested to include various notifications and disclosures in every syllabus. That is the reason for the legalistic tone of portions of this document. Most announced policies may be subject to reasonable modification when circumstances warrant. If you are in doubt, just ask!

Please note that all information contained in this course syllabus, other than the grade and absence policies, may be subject to change with reasonable advance notice, as Professor Lavine deems appropriate.

Overview

The following is the official course description:
Career: Undergraduate
Units: 3.00
Grading Basis: Regular Grades
Course Components: Lecture Required
Typically Offered: Fall and Spring
Course Attribute: Cross Listed

Description:
Survey of basic issues in the philosophy of language such as: speech acts, reference, meaning, logical form.

Characteristics:
Equivalent To: LING 463
Also Offered As: LING 463
May be Convened With: PHIL 563

We shall analyze a variety of theories of speech acts, logical form, descriptions, literal and speaker meaning, reference and the role of compositionality in language, reading original works. At the end of the semester, we shall discuss issues related to radical translation and interpretation in some detail.

Admission to the Course

If you wish to take the course but enrollment has been closed, just show up. I shall let you know whether you are admitted after the second lecture. Though I cannot make any ironclad promises, everyone is usually admitted.

Expected Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you will have a good grasp of core issues in the philosophy of language. More generally, you will have gained an increased ability to critically assess sophisticated philosophical texts.

Texts

The texts should be available in the ASUA bookstore.
Required:
[Ludlow97]  

Recommended:
[Lycan08]  

In addition to the texts, I may post lecture notes on-line on the class website.

Course Requirements

Percentages of course grade are as indicated parenthetically.
For the undergraduate course, numbered 439: There will be two required typed, double-spaced papers of 5–10 pages (that is, at least 1,250 words, or 6,250 characters in length—40%), reactions (15%) and questions (15%), as described below, a midterm examination, and a final examination (30%).

The final examination will be Friday, 13 December, 10:30 A.M. –12:30 P.M. The final examination is a mandatory part of the undergraduate course. If you will be unable to take it for any reason, do not take this course. Of course, with documentation, serious medical excuses and the like will be accepted. Airplane tickets, weddings, and so forth, will not be.

For the graduate course, numbered 516: There will be two required 10–20-page typed, double-spaced papers (that is, papers of at least 2,500–3,000 words, or 12,500–15,000 characters in length—70%), reactions (15%), and questions (15%), as described below.

Reactions and Questions

The class will be divided up into two groups: Group 1 consists of those members of the class with first names beginning with letters A–K; group 2, L–Z. On each class day, one of the groups will be assigned to provide reactions and the other, questions, as indicated on the Calendar. Reactions and questions are to be submitted no later than 10 P.M. on the day before class. Reactions and questions will be on the pages linked to the Calendar. Access is password restricted so that only members of the class can post and see what has been posted.

Guidelines for reactions

Give some brief thoughts about or reactions to the assigned reading for the given class. That may include worries or objections you have about positions taken or claims made, comments about wider issues the text points to, and the like. Your reaction should be succinct, about 100 to 150 words. It should rarely, if ever be longer than 300 words. Reactions should be posted in the reactions comment box on the appropriate page—the one linked to the day on the Calendar.

Guidelines for questions

Pose three questions concerning the assigned reading for the given class. You might, for example, ask questions of clarification about claims or arguments or ideas in the reading, or questions that you think it would be good for us to pursue in general class discussion. Questions should be posted in the questions comment box on the appropriate page—the one linked to the day on the Calendar.

Papers

Papers are due at 11:59 P.M. on their due dates. Papers should be submitted by emailing them as attachments to plpapers@nometaphysicsREMOVE_THIS_TO_FORM_EMAIL_ADDRESS.org (remove the 'REMOVE_THIS_TO_FORM_EMAIL_ADDRESS'), preferably as pdf files. Make sure your last name is part of the file name. Do not use the
You should consult How to Write a Philosophy Paper before beginning to write your paper. Some of the links there will have suggestions about how to formulate a good thesis. I shall use GradingRubric to grade your papers. Look at it. That will give you a sense of what will be emphasized. The descriptions of what various subgrades mean are only intended to be indications of a standard—they do not, and were not intended to, cover all cases. Papers will be judged on their quality, not on their length.

The papers will be on topics of your choice, so long as they are relevant to the subject of the course. Pick a specific argument or group of arguments to present and evaluate. The most common sort of topic is contrasting two views we have studied. If your paper is not primarily concerned with at least one of the class readings, you must get the topic approved by me. You are always welcome to clear topics with me and to submit drafts or outlines to me either by e-mail or in person—the earlier the better.

Your papers should present the relevant positions clearly and assess their strengths and weaknesses. Note that if you get a position wrong, you are unlikely to assess it well. There is rarely only one correct interpretation of anything, but—whatever your interpretation—you must document it by giving page or line references to the passages on which the interpretation is based. Do not use quotations unless the precise wording of a passage is crucial. Explain views in your own words.

The papers for the course are not primarily research papers, though I shall expect, especially for the graduate portion of the course, evidence that you have done relevant research. You must show that you have read the relevant texts carefully, thought about them, and made some sense of them. Do not report the views of others. Struggle with the texts on your own. Page references to the assigned text should be given in parentheses in the body of a paper. When you consult works other than the assigned texts, list them in a bibliography with additional acknowledgment given to any writer who influenced your thinking. The Chicago Manual of Style is a useful reference for other matters of style. If you quote from any work, or paraphrase it, or make use of ideas you acquired from it, you must note explicitly that you have done so—in the case of direct quotation, the use of quotation marks will suffice. Failure to acknowledge sources or to note quotation or paraphrase constitutes plagiarism—intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own in any academic exercise, which is the ultimate academic crime—see the Code of Conduct in the ABOR Policy Manual, beginning at 5-301.C.1 Any cheating, fabrication, or plagiarism will result in a failing grade for the course, and I may recommend additional penalties ranging from making the infraction a permanent part of your academic record to expulsion from the University, in accordance with the UA Code of Academic Integrity.

**Advice on Writing a Paper**
The main thing I shall be looking for in your paper is a clear thesis, stated in a sentence or two in the first paragraph of the paper, that you successfully defend by either giving good arguments for it or by undermining obvious or standard arguments against it. The thesis need not be one that solves a substantial philosophical problem. It might be, for example, that A's argument that such and such a problem is not solvable does not quite establish that conclusion, because…. A "book report," which explains the views in the texts and in secondary sources you have consulted without giving your own reasons and analysis will receive a poor grade, however thorough, accurate, and well researched it may be.

It is very important to express yourself clearly and precisely: So long as I can understand you, it doesn't matter, but, given the subtlety of the ideas being discussed, I won't understand you if you are not as clear and precise as possible. Don't confuse the reference of a term with its meaning or the idea of a thing with the thing itself: even if you are not confused, if the exact literal meaning of what you have written is not correct, I shall end up confused when reading your work. When you introduce a claim, make sure it is clear whether you are taking it be an assumption, a controversial claim requiring discussion, an hypothesis introduced so you can refute it, something you intend to establish or whatever. In addition, when you introduce a claim, make sure it is clear whether the claim is yours, something you take a philosopher (who? page reference?) to have claimed that you are reporting, something you take a philosopher (who? page reference?) to have claimed that you are endorsing, or disputing, or whatever. When you wrap up an argument, do you think you have established something, shown that an argument against it is inconclusive, shown it can't be right, given additional reasons for doubting it, …?

Examinations

The examinations will consist of short answer or multiple choice questions, each requiring an answer of at most a sentence or two. The examinations will cover all material presented in class and in the assigned readings. You will be allowed to consult your notes but not your books. (Please draw the obvious moral: take good notes on your reading.)

Grading

Your attendance and participation in the class will determine what happens to your grade in borderline or questionable cases. The undergraduate examination grade will be the average of the curved midterm and final examination grades, or your curved final examination grade, whichever is greater. That is, I drop the midterm grade if you do better on the final. If you wish to complete an assignment late, you must get approval from me at least one week before the assignment is due. All holidays or special events observed by organized religions will be honored for those students who show affiliation with that particular religion. Absences preapproved by the UA Dean of Students (or Dean's designee) will be honored. Otherwise, short of serious medical excuses with written documentation, late work may result in grading penalties. If you believe that a mistake has been made in the grading of one of your assignments, you must put your reasons for thinking so in writing and then submit them to me within one week from the time the paper or examination was returned. All grades that have not been appealed will be considered final after one week. No oral appeals of grades will be considered. If there is still
a problem after receiving a response to your appeal, you may then make an appointment to
discuss the matter.

**Participation**

Attend class. Be prompt. Participate. Ask questions. If you aren't following something, lots of
other people aren't either—help them out by stopping me. Those who look like they are
following are often merely doing a good job of covering that they are napping. Make use of
office hours and of the web site. If you are not at ease contributing regularly to class discussions,
consider preparing your contributions in advance. You might write down any questions you have
concerning the course material and use those to initiate discussion. I recommend that you talk
among yourselves about the material both before and after class.

I expect acceptable classroom behavior at all times. Disruptive or threatening behavior may
result in disciplinary procedures leading to severe penalties. See the [UA Policy on Threatening
Behavior by Students](#), and documents referenced therein.

**Students with Disabilities**

Students with physical, psychological, or learning disabilities who anticipate needing
accommodations in this course are encouraged to register with the [S.A.L.T. Center](#) or the
[Disability Resource Center](#).

Students with special needs who are registered with the [S.A.L.T. Center](#) or the [Disability
Resource Center](#) are reminded that they must submit appropriate documentation to Professor
Lavine as soon as possible if they are requesting special accommodations.

**Office Hours**

My office hours are for your benefit. I encourage you to come, whether to talk about the reading,
the class discussions, or your homework. You are particularly strongly encouraged to discuss the
homework and comments made on it. Individual discussions usually result in more (and easier)
learning than classes alone. Use the opportunity.

My office hours are Monday and Wednesday 12:00 P.M. –12:50 P.M. in room 208 Social
Sciences or by appointment. Feel free to come up after class to make an appointment. My
scheduled office hours are brief because I prefer to make appointments on an individual basis. I
often reserve the second half of my office hours for prearranged meetings with students. If you
drop in then, be aware that you are more likely to find me unavailable. My office telephone
number is 621-7109, and I may be reached outside of office hours by leaving a message at the
department office, 621-5045, or, preferably, by e-mail,
shaughan@arizonaREMOVE_THIS_TO_FORM_EMAIL_ADDRESS.edu.

**Calendar**

*The notation (1,2), for example, means that group 1 posts reactions and group 2, questions.*

**It is also the link to the page on which your reactions and questions should be posted.**
The calendar is a bit optimistic; we may have to skip some of the material at the end.

**26 August**
First day. Description of the course's content.

28 August

30 August

2 September
Labor Day. No class.

4 September
Chapter 2. Ludwig Wittgenstein. Excerpt from the Blue and Brown books, pp. 31–47. (2,1)

6 September
Chapter 3. Willard Van Orman Quine, “Translation and meaning,” pp. 49–57. (1,2)

9 September

11 September

13 September

16 September

18 September

20 September

23 September

25 September
Chapter 23. John R. Searle, “Proper names,” pp. 585–592. (1,2)

27 September

30 September
Chapter 25. Saul A. Kripke, Lecture II of Naming and Necessity, pp. 609–634. (1,2)

2 October

4 October
Question and answer session.

7 October
Midterm examination.

9 October
Chapter 27. Scott Weinstein, “Truth and demonstratives,” pp. 663–667. (1,2)

11 October

14 October
Chapter 29. John Perry, “Frege on demonstratives,” pp. 693–715. (1,2)

16 October

18 October
Chapter 11. Donald Davidson, “The logical form of action sentences,” pp. 217–232. (1,2)

21 October

23 October
Chapter 32. Rudolf Carnap, “The method of intension,” pp. 779–791. (1,2)

25 October

28 October
Chapter 34. Willard Van Orman Quine, “Vagaries of reference,” pp. 801–815. (1,2)

30 October
Chapter 35. Donald Davidson, “On saying that,” pp. 817–831. (2,1)

1 November

4 November
Chapter 38. Saul Kripke, “A puzzle about belief,” pp. 875–920. (2,1)

6 November
Chapter 40. Mark Crimmins and John Perry, “The prince and the phone booth: Reporting puzzling beliefs,” pp. 963–991. (1,2)

8 November

11 November
Veteran's Day. No class.

13 November
Chapter 7. Michael Dummett, “What is a theory of meaning?,” pp. 129–155. (1,2)

15 November
Donald Davidson, “A nice derangement of epitaphs”

[Davidson86]

(2,1)

18 November
Willard Van Orman Quine, “Translation and meaning,” continued, pp. 35–79. 📚 Not the whole chapter—the continuation of what we read so far.

[Quine60]

(1,2)

20 November
22 November
Donald Davidson, “Radical interpretation”
[Davidson73]

25 November
Donald Davidson, “Belief and the basis of meaning”
[Davidson74b]

27 November
Willard Van Orman Quine, “Comment on Donald Davidson”
[Quine74b]

29 November
Thanksgiving recess. No class

2 December
[Lewis83]
“Radical interpretation”
[Lewis74]

4 December
Donald Davidson, “Replies to David Lewis and W. V. Quine”
[Davidson74]

6 December
[Davidson90]

9 December
Shaughan Lavine, *How to talk with strangers* (1,2)

11 December
Last day. **Second paper due.** Overview and question and answer session.
13 December

**Final examination.** 10:30 A.M.–12:30 P.M.

-- ShaughanLavine - 26 Aug 2013

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Topic revision: r22 - 15 Sep 2013, ShaughanLavine