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| Code of course: **BMI-LOTD17-202E.04,** **BBN-FIL-311.04, BMA-FILD-311.04, BMI-LOTD17-202E, BMA-LOTD17-202.03** |
| Title of course: **Theories of meaning** |
| Lecturer: **Zsófia Zvolenszky** |
| **General aims of the course:**  The aim of the course is to review and discuss central issues in philosophy of language based on influential primary and secondary texts.  **Prerequisites:**  – Students should be prepared to read and discuss materials in English. The language of instruction for the course is English.  **Content of the course:**  A preliminary list of themes covered (the list is subject to change):  **•** Frege on sense and reference, on proper names and definite descriptions  • Russell and Strawson on definite descriptions  • Kripke on proper names  • Kripke and Putnam on natural kind terms  • Context-sensitive expressions  • Quine on analyticity  • Grice on meaning  • Austin and Searle on speech acts  • Grice on communication  • Applications of Grice, Frege, Strawson: for example, pejorative language use  Our words, sentences are about—refer to—things in the world: objects, people, events. Plausibly, the meanings of expressions play a central role in explaining this referential feature: for example, it is in virtue of the meaning of the word ’horse’ that it refers to horses. But what exactly does this role played by meaning consist in? The answer is not at all straightforward. Consider these two sentences:  Joanne K. Rowling is a famous novelist.  Robert Galbraith is a famous novelist.  How does the meaning of the first sentence differ from the meaning of the second? After all, both are about the same individual: who is called Joanne K. Rowling but has become famous as J. K. Rowling, also writing under the pseudonym ‘Robert Galbraith’. Yet—according to Gottlob Frege—the two sentences cannot have the same meaning because someone may rationally believe one (the first, say), without believing the other. This is what Frege’s “puzzle” consists in, providing the starting point for 20th-century philosophy of language. In the seminar, our aim is to gain a greater understanding of the nature of meaning, and its relation to reference, truth, communication.  **Grading criteria, specific requirements:**  – 30–40 pages of reading each week  – at the beginning of (almost) every seminar, a short quiz (the 6 highest scores count towards 20% of the final grade)  – posting 2 questions/comments at the course discussion forum each week (the 6 best make up 20 % of the final grade), by 4 p.m. on the previous day  – class participation (worth 15 %)  – writing 3 short (2-3-page-long) response papers during the semester (the best 2 of these go towards 30 % of the final grade)  – once during the semester, acting as MC (Master of Ceremonies) (this involves briefly introducing the readings as well as students’ questions and comments, worth 15 %)  You should come to class ready to discuss the readings, having read them all, preferably several times—reading philosophy can be tricky (the “textbook” readings should make it much easier to read the classic papers by Frege, Russell, etc.) You should post 2 questions/comments on the readings by 4 p.m. the previous day. Being Master of Ceremonies (when it’s your turn) involves: (i) giving a brief, 3-minute summary of the readings, selecting maximum ten of the student questions/comments posted by students, grouping them by topic, compiling a handout of the questions/comments that you make available to students. Be sure to include the authors of the questions, so we know who made which comment.  In the **response paper**, you should focus on critical assessment, don’t just summarize the readings. Instead, select an argument or claim that you consider interesting and critique it.  Three useful sites about writing response papers:  http://www.davidhildebrand.org/uploads/3/2/1/2/32124749/hildebrand\_how\_to\_write\_a\_short\_critical\_paper.pdf  http://web.mit.edu/sts001/www/responsetips.pdf  http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html (this one is intended for a longer piece than ours).  It’s a good idea to get started early on the response papers, so you can get feedback based on which you can make your next response paper even better. For this reason, you can only hand in one response paper at a time, and by mid-semester you should hand in at least two of your response papers.  Regular preparation, attendance and participation are required. To receive a grade, you must attend at least 7 seminars (including the one when you are M.C.-ing).  **Required reading:**  Alongside seminal texts in the philosophy of language (by Frege, Grice, Kripke, Strawson, Austin, Searle, Putnam), and a recent survey article on racism in language use (by Langton, Haslanger and Anderson), one more reading will function as a “textbook”:   * W. Lycan (ed.) 2008: *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge (referred to as ‘Lycan’ in the schedule below). Excerpts from selected chapters will be assigned.   Electronic copies of all required readings are available in the Gmail Drive for the course.  The seminal texts (by Frege, Grice, Kripke and Strawson) can also be found in the following anthology:   * P. Martinich and D. Sosa (eds.) 2012: *The Philosophy of Language*, 6th edition*.* Oxford: OUP. (Previous editions are ok, except for Frege’s “Sense and Reference”, which appears in a different translation in earlier editions.)   Langton–Haslanger–Anderson’s survey article “Language and Race” can be found in the following anthology of essays:   * + G. Russell and D. G. Fara (eds.) 2012: *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Routledge.   The bulk of the articles can also be found in the following anthology:   * + P. Martinich (ed.) 1996: The Philosophy of Language. Oxford: OUP.   **Suggested further reading:**  Further essays, chapters in the volumes used in the course:   * W. Lycan (ed.) 2008: *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge (referred to as ‘Lycan’ in the schedule below). Excerpts from selected chapters will be assigned.   Electronic copies of all required readings are available in the Gmail Drive for the course.   * P. Martinich and D. Sosa (eds.) 2012: *The Philosophy of Language*, 6th edition*.* Oxford: OUP. (Previous editions are ok, except for Frege’s “Sense and Reference”, which appears in a different translation in earlier editions.)   + G. Russell and D. G. Fara (eds.) 2012: *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Routledge.   + S. Kripke 1972/1980: *Naming and Necessity.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell. |