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| Code of course: BMA-LOTD-411.04; BMI-LOTD-411E.04 |
| Title of course: **Advanced Topics in the Philosophy of Language: Words of Oppression** |
| Instructor: **Zsófia Zvolenszky** |
| The **first meeting** for this course is on **September 15, 2021.**  **General aim of the course:**  This is an advanced philosophy of language seminar exploring preliminary and secondary texts from the 20th and 21st centuries on ways in which language can and has been used – and abused – as a tool of oppression, subordination and exclusion of others based on group membership: because of the color of their skin, their gender, their sexual orientation, their ethnic background, their accent, their financial or education status, their views about religion, and in numerous other ways.  **Prerequisites:**  – Students should be prepared to read and discuss materials in English. The language of instruction for the course is English.  – This is an advanced course intended for students with some familiarity with contemporary Anglo-American analytic philosophy, its approach, tools, readings. Students are expected to have taken at least one course in: logic, philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind.  – If you haven’t yet taken a course in one of the above areas: the instructor’s permission is required for taking this Advanced Topics course.  **Content of the course:**  What are various ways pejorative words or phrases (including slurs, hate speech) can be used to oppress, subordinate, demean, exclude, disempower, silence? And what are various ways language can be used to counteract these forms of oppression, exclusion? We’ll be relying on semantic and pragmatic accounts of what speakers mean and convey (via linguistic presuppositions, conversational implicatures, conventional implicatures, for example) beyond the conventional meaning of the words they use in order to better understand the communicative role and impact of pejorative words, phrases.  **Grading criteria, specific requirements:**  – 30–40 pages of reading each week and 20-40 minutes of podcast listening  – posting questions/comments at the course discussion forum each week  – class participation  – writing a seminar paper or several shorter response papers  – once during the semester, acting as MC (Master of Ceremonies) (this involves briefly introducing the readings as well as students’ questions and comments)  In the **seminar paper or response papers**, 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 readings, materials include:**   * Some of the prominent philosophers who have written on this topic include: Elizabeth Camp, Robin Jeshion, Teresa Marques, Mihaela Popa-Wyatt, Dan Zeman. We’ll be reading from several of them; we’ll primarily be reading an anthology of essays edited by David Sosa: *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs* (2018 OUP) and read parts of a textbook written by Josh Dever and Herman Cappelen: *Bad Language* (2019 OUP).   A philosophy podcast we’ll be regularly listening to during the course:   * on contemporary, society-oriented approaches in philosophy by philosophers with diverse backgrounds: a podcast by Myisha Cherry called *Unmute* <https://unmutetalk.podbean.com> (also on your podcast player), and published in 2019 as a book by OUP, entitled *Unmuted: Conversations on Prejudice, Oppression, and Social Justice*.   If you have read through the syllabus and have questions, send the instructor an email at [zvolenszky@nyu.edu](mailto:zvolenszky@nyu.edu) or a whatsapp message at +36308522531 |