

Philosophy of Language

It's obvious that words and sentences have meanings, but what are meanings? This course will start by looking at traditional answers philosophers have given to this question (semantics) before we consider whether recent developments in artificial intelligence give us reason to reject them. We'll then move to looking at how language is used (pragmatics). Finally, we'll look at what happens when we reject the idea that there are such a thing as meanings, and what this *means* for metaphysics and science.

Week 1. Sense & Reference

Gotlob Frege "Sense and Reference"

Gotlob Frege "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry"

Imogen Dickie "Informative identities in the Begriffsschrift and "On Sense and Reference"

Week 2. Natural Kind Externalism

Katalin Farkas "Semantic internalism and externalism"

Hilary Putnam "Meaning and reference"

Sally Haslanger "Language, Politics, and "The Folk"' from Resisting Reality

Week 3. Social Externalism

Åsa Wikforss "Social Externalism and Conceptual Error"

Willard Quine "Two Dogmas of Empiricism (esp. section 6)"

Week 4. Genericity

Sarah-Jane Leslie "The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization"

Sarah-Jane Leslie "Generics: Cognition and Acquisition"

Rachel Sterken "The Meaning of Generics"

Week 5. Meaning & Intention

Paul Grice "Meaning"

Emma Borg "Intention-based semantics"

Week 6. Meaning & Convention

David Lewis "Languages and Language"

Anita Avramides "Intention and Convention"

Margaret Gilbert "Social Convention Revisited"

Week 7. Meaning without Speakers?

Emily Bender & Alexander Koller “Climbing towards NLU: On Meaning, Form, and Understanding in the Age of Data”

Frances Clooney “Why the Veda Has No Author: Language as Ritual in Early Mīmāṃsā and Post-Modern Theology”

Michel Foucault “What is an Author?”

Week 8. Assertion & Context

Robert Stalnaker “Assertion”

Robert Stalnaker “On the Representation of Context”

Week 9. Implicature & Pragmatics

Paul Grice “Logic and Conversation”

Wayne Davis “Implicature”

Robin Carston “Implicature, Explicature, and Truth-Theoretic Semantics”

Week 10. Semantic Innovation

Donald Davidson “A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs”

Marga Reimer “What malapropisms mean: A reply to Donald Davidson”

Elizabeth Camp “Conventions’ Revenge: Davidson, Derangement, and Dormativity”

Week 11. The Language of Philosophy

Richard Rorty “The Contingency of Language”

Robert Brandom “Rorty on Vocabularies”

Anita Avramides “Davidson, Grice, and the social aspects of language”