Philosophy of Language (01:730:210)
Rutgers University, Fall 2015

Time	9:50–12:50 AM, Monday, Sept. 8th–Dec. 7th
Location	112, Murray Hall, College Ave
Instructor	Peter van Elswyk
Office Hours	Tuesday 11:00 AM–1:00 PM, by appointment
Office Location	304, Gateway Transit Building, College Ave

1 Description

The purpose of language is to facilitate communication. Roughly, here is how language makes that happen. A person performs a speech act by uttering a sentence. That speech act conveys information. Then the speech act influences the conversation.
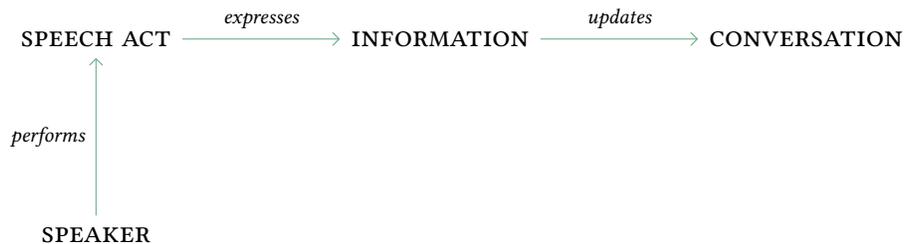
This course will introduce students to the philosophy of language by exploring various perspectives on how to fill out this picture of linguistic communication. We will read both classic and contemporary work from the philosophy of language and related branches of linguistics (*e.g.* natural language semantics) to explore the nature of speech acts, the conversational dynamics characteristically had by speech acts, and the differences between asserted, presupposed, and implicated information. We will then end the semester by exploring the sociopolitics of linguistic communication. To do that, we will apply what we have learned to better understand *expressives*. Expressives are slurs, pejoratives, and other words used to offend and/or criticize.

2   Textbook

There is no required textbook. All readings will be posted on Sakai. But there will be books worth owning because you will be reading large selections from them. Those books are Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (ISBN# 0631128018) and David Lewis's *Convention* (ISBN# 0631232575). I highly recommend that you purchase both books.

3   Evaluation

There are a total of 2000 points that can be earned in this course. These points can be earned in **response essays** (1000 pts), **pop quizzes** (250 pts), **participation** (250 pts), and a **final paper** (500 pts). The final grade will be calculated from the total number of points.

A = 1800–2000 pts (90–100%)

B+ = 1700–1799 pts (85–89%)

B = 1600–1699 pts (80–84%)

C+ = 1500–1599 pts (75–79%)

C = 1400–1499 pts (70–74%)

D = 1200–1399 pts (60–69%)

F = 0–1199 pts (50–59%)

Response essays (50%). The course is divided into eleven units. A response essay is due after each unit. See the schedule below for due dates. Each response essay is worth 100 pts and must be no shorter than 500 words. The purpose of the response essays is to prompt engagement with assigned readings. Every student must complete 10 response essays to receive full credit. Since there is an essay for each of the eleven units, students can skip exactly one of the response essays and still receive full credit *or* write all of the essays and then I will drop the lowest grade.

Final paper (25%). There will be a final paper worth 500 pts. The final paper will grow out of a response essay you have already written. Students will revise a response essay in light of my feedback and develop it into a full paper no shorter than 3,000 words. A rewarding grade on the final paper can often be guaranteed if you invest in your response essays.

Pop quizzes (12.5%). There will be five pop quizzes. Each pop quiz is worth 50 pts and will be comprised of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions. The purpose of the pop quizzes is to assess your comprehension of the assigned readings. They will often ask about issues not covered in class but prominently covered in the readings.

Participation (12.5%). Not counting the first day, class meets 12 times. Students can earn 20 pts by participating each class. Even if you are shy or introverted, I expect you to contribute to activities and discussions at least once during every 3–hour class.

RESPONSE ESSAYS

50%

QUIZZES

12.5%

12.5%

25%

FINAL PAPER

PARTICIPATION
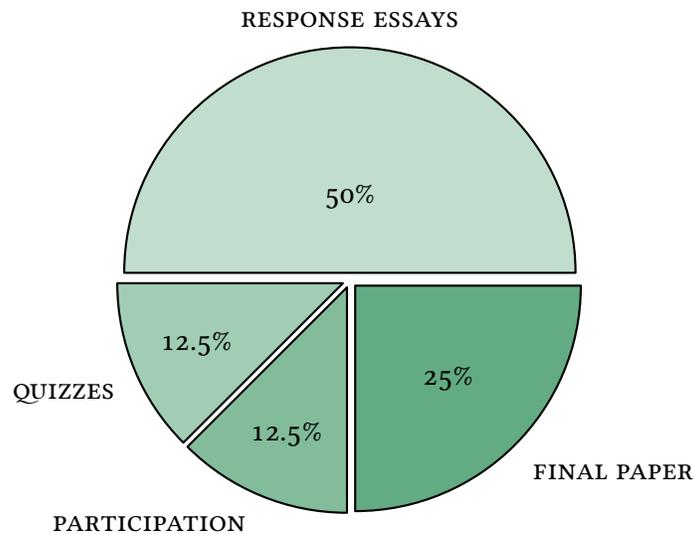
4   Policies

4.1   Attendance policy

Attendance is mandatory. After two absences, your final grade drops a letter. After that, your final grade will continue to drop for every absence. If you cannot attend a class session, report your absence at https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/. Absences are excused only if they are accompanied by a Dean's note. Note: if you miss a pop quiz because you are absent, you can only make up the quiz with a Dean's note.

4.2 Late policy

I will accept late response essays, but 10 pts will be deducted for every day the assignment is late. To still receive any points, the latest you can turn in work is 10 days after it was due. There is one exception: with a Dean's note, you can turn in homework late without being penalized.

4.3 Academic integrity

I expect students to follow the academic integrity policy for all of the required assignments and quizzes. If you are confused about what counts as plagiarism or cheating, consult the policy at http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers.

4.4 Laptop policy

Laptop use is not permitted in class. This might seem harsh, but the reason is simple. **Studies show that students perform better if they are unplugged.** And I want you to succeed in this class. For more on the basis of this class policy, consult the following articles:

+ Hembroke, H. & Gay, G. (2003). "The laptop and the lecture: the effects of multitasking in learning environments." *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 15.1, 46–64.

+ Fried, C. (2008). "In–Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning." *Computers & Education* 50.3 (April), 906–914.

+ Sana, F., Weston, T., & Cepeda, N. (2013). "Laptop Multitasking Hinders Classroom Learning for Both Users and Nearby Peers." *Computers & Education* 62 (March), 24–31.

+ Mueller, P. & Oppenheimer, D. (2014)."The pen is mightier than the keyboard: advantages of longhand over laptop note taking." *Psychological Science* 25.6 (June), 1159–1168.

At the beginning of each class, I will provide a handout. I recommend taking notes on these handouts and then keeping a folder of the all the handouts passed out during the semester.

5 Sakai

I will be making frequent use of Sakai. You can access the portal for Sakai at https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal. In addition to being the place where I post readings, handouts from class, and course announcements, you will frequently turn in your response essays there.

6 Disability

If you are differently abled, you are encouraged to work with a Coordinator from the Office of Disability Services. They will provide you with an official notice for you to give me, which will detail what we can do to help you succeed in this philosophy class.

7 Schedule

Dates	Reading	Homework	Topics
9/8			Introduction
9/14	Searle, Strawson		Speech acts
9/21	Frege	Response #1	Meaning: Sense
9/28	Kripke	Response #2	Meaning: Reference
10/5	Kaplan	Response #3	Meaning: Character
10/12	Lewis, Millikan	Response #4	Meaning: Origins
10/19	Russell, Strawson	Response #5	Presuppositions
10/26	Stalnaker, Lewis	Response #6	Dynamics: Assertion
11/2	Heim, Kartunnen	Response #7	Dynamics: Files
11/9	Grice	Response #8	Pragmatics
11/16	Roberts	Response #9	Information Structure
11/23	TBD	Response #10	TBD
11/30	Potts, Schlenker		Expressives
12/7	Anderson & Lepore, Camp	Response #11	Expressives

8 Advice

8.1 Advice on reading

You will be reading 1–2 papers for each class. Some of these papers will be really hard. **You should therefore plan on reading every paper twice.** On the first

pass, read the paper quickly in a single sitting to get the overall point the author is trying to make. Flag any sections you initially have trouble understanding. On the second pass, revisit the flagged sections and sort out the details you previously found confusing. If you are still having trouble making headway, write down what you do not understand and bring up your question at a point in the class where that detail is relevant to what is being discussed.

8.2   Advice on writing

Almost every week, you will be writing 500+ words for your response essay. But good philosophical writing is different from other styles of writing. Precision matters more than lively prose; a well–argued point matters more than a provocative point. **And what you have learned about writing well from other teachers might not apply to philosophical writing.** As a result, I strongly recommend that you read this guide to philosophical writing before you write your first essay: http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html. You should also plan on reading my guides to writing response essays and the final paper. Both guides are available on Sakai.

9   Readings

The readings for the course are listed below in the order they appear on the schedule. All of the readings will be available on Sakai. For many of the readings, the copy available on Sakai will be shorter than the version listed. That is because some of the readings are drawn from books, dissertations, or articles that are notoriously long.

1. Searle, J. (1965). "What is a Speech Act?" In Max Black (ed.). *Philosophy in America*. Cornell University Press.

2. Strawson, P.F. (1964). "Intention and Convention in Speech Acts." *Philosophical Review* 73 (4):439–460.

3. Frege, G. (1892). "Über Sinn und Bedeutung." *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* C: 25–5.

4. Kripke, S. (1980). *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press.

5. Kaplan, D. (1977/1989). "Demonstratives." In Joseph Almog, John Perry & Howard Wettstein (eds.). *Themes From Kaplan*. Oxford University Press.

6. Lewis, D. (1969). *Convention: A Philosophical Study.* Harvard University Press.

7. Millikan, R. (1984). *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories.* MIT Press.

8. Russell, B. (1905). "On Denoting." *Mind* 14: 479–493.

9. Strawson, P.F. (1950). "On Referring." *Mind* 59: 320–44.

10. Stalnaker, R. (1978). "Assertion." *Syntax and Semantics 9.*315–332.

11. Lewis, D. (1979). "Scorekeeping in a Language Game." *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 8 (1): 339–359.

12. Heim, I. (1982). "The Semantics of Definite and Indefinite Noun Phrases." Dissertation, UMass Amherst.

13. Karttunen, L. (1975). "Discourse Referents." *Syntax and Semantics* 7, 363–385.

14. Grice, P. (1975). "Logic and Conversation." In Cole Peter & Jerry Morgan (eds.). *Syntax and Semantics 3.* Academic Press.

15. Roberts, C. (1996/2012). "Information Structure In Discourse: Towards an Integrated Formal Theory of Pragmatics." *Semantics & Pragmatics* 5.6: 1–69.

16. Potts, C. (2007). "The expressive dimension." *Theoretical Linguistics* 33.2: 165–198.

17. Schlenker, P. (2007). "Expressive presuppositions." *Theoretical Linguistics* 237–245.

18. Anderson, L. & E. Lepore (2013). "Slurring Words." *Noûs* 47 (1): 25–48.

19. Camp, E. (2013). "Slurring Perspectives." *Analytic Philosophy* 54, 330–349.