

## **PHI/LIN 5570 & PHI 7790: Philosophy of Language** **Course Syllabus**

Instructor: Dr. Mark Satta  
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Office Hours: Wed. 3-5pm or by appointment

Class Location: Science Hall Room 1125  
Class Time: Mon. & Wed. from 5:30-7:10pm  
Term: Fall 2022

### **Course Description:**

There are many philosophical questions one can ask about language. This course addresses some of the key questions addressed in twentieth-century analytic philosophy of language as well as many contemporary questions where philosophy of language has been applied to issues in social, political, and legal philosophy. These questions include the following:

- What is meaning and how does it work?
- Do different types of words need different theories of meaning (e.g. verbs versus pronouns versus proper names)? What are the best theories of meaning for these word-types?
- How do we use language to act? What is the philosophical significance of such “speech acts”?
- Which acts ought to be considered speech for purposes of legal free speech protection?
- How does language influence our mental, social, and political lives and vice versa?
- To what extent can natural language successfully be translated from one natural language to another or into formal languages used in domains like logic, math, or programming?
- How much of meaning is literal as opposed to being pragmatic, implicit, or metaphorical?
- Should we work toward changing our language to better serve our needs and interests? If so, how?

### **Learning Outcomes:**

During the semester you will probably encounter some views that you like and others that you do not like. My goal is not to convince you to adopt any particular view. Rather my goals are that by the end of the course you will be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate a basic understanding of some of the key concepts and debates in philosophy of language.
- Apply critical thinking skills to assess arguments and claims about meaning and language.
- Express your own positions about contested issues in philosophy of language in clear prose.
- Identify contemporary applications of traditional doctrines and questions in philosophy of language.
- Examine philosophical questions about the nature of language from multiple perspectives.

**Required Texts:** All readings for this course will be provided on the course’s Canvas page.

### **Grading:**

Attendance and Participation	10%
Short Reading Responses	48% (12 responses worth 4% of your grade each)
Midterm Essay	17%
Final Essay	25%

**Grading Scale:**

A if  $\geq 93\%$   
A- if between  $90\% \leq$  and  $<93\%$   
B+ if between  $87\% \leq$  and  $<90\%$   
B if between  $83\% \leq$  and  $<87\%$   
B- if between  $80\% \leq$  and  $<83\%$   
C+ if between  $77\% \leq$  and  $<80\%$   
C if between  $73\% \leq$  and  $<77\%$   
C- if between  $70\% \leq$  and  $<73\%$   
D+ if between  $67\% \leq$  and  $<70\%$   
D if between  $63\% \leq$  and  $<67\%$   
D- if between  $60\% \leq$  and  $<63\%$   
F if  $<60\%$ : F

**Attendance & Participation:** Your participation grade will be based on class attendance, as well as your preparedness for class and your participation in class discussion and activities. Students are required to participate in a manner that is respectful to all. If you have an occasional scheduling conflict for which you need to miss some or all of a class period, please let me know in advance if possible. Excused absences will not harm your participation grade and absences are more likely to be excused if you reach out to me in advance. Thus, it is in your own interest to let me know about potential absences in advance. I reserve the right to begin assigning short reading quizzes at the start of class as part of your participation grade if I find that students are not sufficiently prepared for a productive discussion during class.

**Short Reading Responses:** For any twelve of the twenty-eight class periods in the semester, you will need to turn in a short reading response. You can decide for which classes to turn in a reading response, but you can only turn in one reading response per class.

Reading responses (1) should briefly summarize the argument or key points of one of the papers assigned for class that week and then (2) raise a thoughtful, substantive question. Your question may involve a challenge, a counterexample, or a request for clarification or more information.

Reading responses should be between 200-400 words. Reading responses must be submitted via Canvas by 2pm the day that the reading will be discussed in class. You *cannot* submit reading responses on entries from the *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language* but may do so for any other reading.

**First (Midterm) Paper:** The first paper is due at 5:30pm on Wednesday, October 26 via Canvas. For this first paper, students will have several options as to what kind of paper they would like to write. They must write a paper that conforms to one of the following styles:

- (a) The first option is writing a descriptive paper where the student provides a well-researched, well-organized, and informative overview of a topic in philosophy of language covered in class. This paper should be between 1,000–3,000 words.
- (b) The second option is to write an op-ed style essay about a topic covered in this course. The goal will be to defend a claim in between 600–1,400 words in a manner suitable for a general audience.
- (c) The third option is for students to write a persuasive paper of between 1,500–3,000 words where the student defends a claim related to a topic covered in the course.

Given the shorter length, my expectations for the quality of the writing will be higher for option (b). No matter which option you choose, you will be required to have your thesis statement or topic approved by me. More details about the requirements and the criteria for assessing these papers will be given during the semester.

**Second (Final) Paper:** The second paper is due by the end of the day (i.e. by 11:59pm) on Wed, Dec. 14 via Canvas. For this second paper, all students will have to write a persuasive paper. Undergraduates need to write a paper that is between 1,500-4,500 words. Graduate students need to write a paper that is between 3,000-7,000 words. More details about the requirements and the criteria for assessing these papers will be given during the semester.

**Weekly Module:** Prior to the start of each week, I will post a new module on Canvas that contains all the content for that week. (For example, at the start of the third week of the term I will add a module called “Week 3” that will include all content assigned in the third week of the term.) A complete reading and assignment schedule is also listed at the end of this syllabus.

**Email:** You should check your WSU email regularly and read all messages sent to you about this class. Failing to read email messages or Canvas announcements is not an excuse for missing deadlines.

**Office Hours:** I will be available for weekly one-on-one meetings with students via Zoom or in person. From 3-4:30pm on Wednesdays, students can sign up for an office hours meeting using the Canvas calendar for this course. I will then email the student a Zoom link to use prior to the scheduled meeting. If the student would rather meet in person, they are welcome to do so. For scheduled meetings, please sign up for them before noon that day. From 4:30-5pm, I will have “drop in” office hours, where students can meet with me on a first-come basis without making an appointment. For students who cannot meet during my regularly scheduled office hours, please email me. I am happy to arrange other times to meet with my students.

**Camera Policy:** For any class sessions that may meet on Zoom (currently this is not something I expect to happen) students should keep their camera on unless they have asked for permission to have their camera off. If you need to have your camera off for class, please email me to request permission in advance. I recognize that there are many good reasons someone could have for needing their camera off and will grant all legitimate requests. Also, I understand that occasionally unanticipated circumstances may arise that require you to temporarily turn off your camera during class without first asking permission. That is no problem.

**Plagiarism & Cheating:** Plagiarism, cheating, or any other form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable. Students should familiarize themselves with the Student Code of Conduct available here: <http://doso.wayne.edu/student-conduct/index.html>. Students should also review the following webpage: <https://doso.wayne.edu/conduct/academic-misconduct>.

In the event that it is discovered that you have violated the code or otherwise engaged in academic dishonesty, you will, at a minimum, fail the assignment connected to the violation or dishonesty. I also reserve the right to fail you for the course or to seek other penalties. If at any point during the semester you find yourself unsure whether something would count as plagiarism or a violation of the Student Code of Conduct, please ask me. I'm more than happy to provide you with additional feedback and information.

**Disability Accommodation:** Wayne State University is committed to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities. I share this commitment. Wayne State University offers a variety of accommodations and services for students with documented disabilities. If you have a documented disability that requires academic adjustments, you should email me by the end of the first week of class to ensure we have time to make proper arrangements. More details about Wayne State's disability accommodations can be found here: <https://studentdisability.wayne.edu/accommodations>.

**Religious Observances:** Wayne State is also committed to providing a welcoming and supportive environment for individuals of all faiths. I share this commitment too. It is University policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of its students. Because of the wide variety of religious affiliations of the Wayne State student body, our academic calendar does not make provisions for religious holidays. Thus, students with classes or examinations that conflict with their religious observances are expected to notify their instructors well in advance so that mutually agreeable alternatives may be worked out. Please notify me at least two weeks in advance of such needs (the obvious exception being observances within the first two weeks of class).

**Nondiscrimination Policy:** Wayne State University is committed to a policy of non-discrimination and equal opportunity in all of its operations. I share this commitment as well. This policy embraces all persons regardless of race, color, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), national origin, religion, age, familial status, marital status, height, weight, disability, or veteran status. Wayne State also expressly forbids sexual harassment and retaliation against an individual for filing a complaint of discrimination or harassment. Please let me or another faculty/staff member know if you are experiencing harassment. More details about Wayne State's nondiscrimination policy can be found here: [https://oeo.wayne.edu/pdf/affrm\\_actn\\_policy.pdf](https://oeo.wayne.edu/pdf/affrm_actn_policy.pdf).

**Campus Emergency Policy:** In the unexpected occurrence of a major campus emergency, I reserve the right to alter course requirements, deadlines, and grading percentages in response to emergency circumstances. If such changes are made, I will do my best to make changes that are fair to all students. To the extent feasible, I will solicit input from students before making any changes.

**Course Drops and Withdrawals:** In the first two weeks of the (full) term, students can drop this class and receive 100% tuition and course fee cancellation. After the end of the second week there is no tuition or fee cancellation. Students who wish to withdraw from the class can initiate a withdrawal request on Academics. You will receive a transcript notation of WP (passing), WF (failing), or WN (no graded work) at the time of withdrawal. No withdrawals can be initiated after the end of the tenth week. Students enrolled in the tenth week and beyond will receive a grade. Because withdrawing from courses may have negative academic and financial consequences, students considering course withdrawal should make sure they fully understand all the consequences before taking this step. More information on this can be found at: <https://wayne.edu/registrar/registration/dropping-and-withdrawing>.

**Class recordings:** Students need prior written permission from me before recording any portion of this class. If permission is granted, the audio and/or video recording is to be used only for the student's personal instructional use. Such recordings are not intended for a wider public audience, such as postings to the internet or sharing with others. Students registered with Student Disabilities Services who wish to record class materials should present their specific accommodation me as soon as possible.

**Reading Schedule:** What follows is a list of the readings assigned each class period. All readings will be posted on Canvas under the module corresponding to the week in which they are assigned. Due dates for all major assignments are also listed. I reserve the right to make alterations to this list if need be (although I don't anticipate doing so). Any alterations to this list will be clearly indicated on the course website and announced in class.

**Class 1, Wed. Aug. 31**

- "Philosophy of Language: An Introductory Overview"
- Introduction from *The Philosophy of Language*, A. P. Martinich

*\*\*Note that Wayne State University is not holding classes on Mon. Sept. 5 in observance of the Labor Day holiday\*\**

**Class 2, Wed. Sept. 7:**

- "Frege's Puzzle and the Meaning of Words," Graham Seth Moore (1000-Word Philosophy)
- "Sense/Reference" entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*
- "Truth Theories," entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*

**Class 3, Mon. Sept. 12:**

- "Speech Act Theory" entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*
- *How To Do Things With Words*, Lectures I & II, J. L. Austin

**Class 4, Wed. Sept. 14:**

- *How To Do Things With Words*, Lecture VIII, J. L. Austin

**Class 5, Mon. Sept. 19:**

- "Free Speech," 1000-Word Philosophy
- "Language and Free Speech," Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan

**Class 6, Wed. Sept. 21:**

- "Hate Speech," Luvel Anderson and Michael Barnes (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

**Class 7, Mon. Sept. 26:**

- "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," Rae Langton

**Class 8, Wed. Sept. 28:**

- "Ambiguity/Vagueness," entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*
- "Vagueness," Darren Hibbs (1000-Word Philosophy)
- "Formal Logic: Symbolizing Arguments in Sentential Logic," Thomas Metcalf (1000-Word Philosophy)

**Class 9, Mon. Oct. 3:**

- "Politics and the English Language," George Orwell
- *The Language Hoax*, Introduction, John McWhorter
- "Linguistic Relativity," entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*

**Class 10, Wed. Oct. 5:**

- *Epistemic Injustice: Power & the Ethics of Knowing*, Introduction and Chapter 7, Miranda Fricker

**Class 11, Mon. Oct. 10:**

- “Hermeneutical Impasses,” Luvell Anderson

**Class 12, Wed. Oct. 12:**

- TBD (Possible class cancellation; possibly “A Cautionary Tale: On Limiting Epistemic Oppression,” Kristie Dotson)

**Class 13, Mon. Oct. 17:**

- “What are We Talking About? The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds” Sally Haslanger
- “What is Misogyny?” Odelia Zuckerman and Clair Morrissey (1000-Word Philosophy)

**Class 14, Wed. Oct. 19:**

- “He/She/They/Ze,” Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak

**Class 15, Mon. Oct. 24:**

- “Logic and Conversation,” H. P. Grice
- “Are All Conversational Implicatures Cancellable?” Matt Weiner

**Class 16, Wed. Oct. 26:**

- TBD (Possibly “Lies and Deception: An Unhappy Divorce,” Jennifer Lackey)
- **MIDTERM PAPER DUE VIA CANVAS BY 5:30PM ON WED, OCT 26**

**Class 17, Mon. Oct. 31:**

- “Language Games,” entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*
- “Formal Logic: Symbolizing Arguments in Quantificational or Predicate Logic,” Timothy Eshing (1000-Word Philosophy)

**Class 18, Wed. Nov. 2:**

- “Descriptions,” Bertrand Russell

**Class 19, Mon. Nov. 7:**

- “Polysemy and Word Meaning,” Agustin Vicente

**Class 20, Wed. Nov. 9:**

- *Epistemology for the Rest of the World*, Manifesto, Stephen Stich and Masaharu Mizumoto
- “Epistemology from a Sanskrit Point of View,” Jonardon Ganeri

**Class 21, Mon. Nov. 14:**

- “Names,” entry in *Key Ideas in Linguistics and Philosophy of Language*
- “Semantics for Blasphemy,” Meghan Sullivan

**Class 22, Wed. Nov. 16:**

- TBD (Possibly “Scorekeeping in a Language Game,” David Lewis)

**Class 23, Mon. Nov 21:**

- “Genocidal Language Games,” Lynne Tirrell

**Class 24, Mon. Nov. 28:**

- “Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language,” Jennifer Saul

**Class 25, Wed. Nov. 30:**

- “Propaganda,” Anne Quaranto and Jason Stanley

**Class 26, Mon. Dec. 5:**

- TBD (Possibly “The Greatest Flood of Mass Suggestion?: John Dewey, Propaganda, and Epistemic Costs of Social Organization,” Justin Pottle)

**Class 27, Wed. Dec. 7:**

- “Sex Talks,” Quill Kukla

**Class 28, Mon. Dec. 12:**

- *Metaphors We Live By*, Chapters 1-4 (they are short chapters), George Lakoff and Mark Johnson
- **FINAL PAPER DUE BY 11:59PM ON WED, DEC 14 VIA CANVAS**