

# PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

PHIL 234

Winter 2005

W, F 1:10pm–2:30pm

Carnegie 225

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The sentence ‘Snow is cold and white’ *means* something in the English language. I can utter it and state or convey something that may or may not be *true*. The French sentence ‘La neige est froide et blanche’ means the same thing partly because the English word ‘snow’ and the French expression ‘la neige’ mean the same thing or pick out the same stuff. That much seems straightforward. But explicating the notion of *meaning* provides the backdrop to some of the most interesting philosophical developments of the last century. In this course, we investigate the nature of linguistic meaning and its relationship to reference and denotation for various types of expression in a language. We build on this exploration with a discussion of the relationship between meaning and truth, and what it is to know a language. We conclude the semester by tackling what it is to be a language used by a community of speakers.

## Texts

Martinich [M], *The Philosophy of Language* (4th ed.) (OUP, 2001).

Devitt and Sterelny [D&S], *Language and Reality* (2nd ed.) (MIT, 1999).

Other readings [r] will be on reserve.

## Coursework

Two papers (1/4 each), due at start of class on:

**F 2/4** (4 pages),

**F 3/18**, (4 pages);

Quiz: **F 2/18** (1/4);

Final exam: **Th 4/14**, 10:30am (1/4).

Attendance and participation are essential: minus 1/3 letter grade for each absence over three.

## Topics

Required readings (@), and optional supplementary readings (\*).

### 1 The “Fido”-Fido Theory of Meaning

@ Mill, “Of Names” [M]

@ Devitt and Sterelny, *Language and Reality* [D&S], ch. 1.

### 2 Sense and Reference

@ Frege, “On Sense and Reference” [M]

@ Devitt and Sterelny, *Language and Reality* [D&S], chs.1 and 2

\* Kenny, *Frege*, ch. 7 [r]

### 3 Names and Descriptions

- @ Russell, “Descriptions” [M]
- @ [D&S], ch.2 (esp. 2.5–2.7), ch.3
- \* Russell, “On Denoting” [M]
- \* Strawson, “On Referring” [M]
- \* Donnellan, “Reference and Definite Descriptions” [M]
- \* [D&S], 5.7

### 4 Causal Theory of Names

- @ Kripke, “Naming and Necessity” [M]
- @ [D&S], ch.4
- \* Evans, “The Causal Theory of Names” [M]

### 5 Natural Kind Terms

- @ Putnam, “Meaning and Reference” [M]

### 6 Defending Descriptivism

- @ Searle, “Proper Names and Intentionality” [M]
- @ Devitt, “Meanings Just Ain’t in the Head” [r]
- @ [D&S], ch.5
- \* Searle, “Proper Names” [M]

### 7 Propositional Attitudes

- @ Kripke, “A Puzzle about Belief” [M]
- \* Barwise & Perry, “Semantic Innocence and Uncompromising Situations” [M]
- \* Quine, “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes” [M]

### 8 Tarski’s Theory of Truth

- @ Tarski, “The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics” [M]
- @ Tarski, “Truth and Proof” [r]

### 9 Truth and Meaning

- @ Davidson, “Truth and Meaning” [M]
- @ [D&S], 2.1–2.4 and 15.4–15.5
- \* Strawson, “Meaning and Truth” [M]
- \* Foster, “Meaning and Truth Theory” [r]
- \* Soames, “Truth, Meaning, and Understanding” [r]

### 10 Intentions and Meaning

- @ Grice, “Meaning” [M]
- @ [D&S], 7.4–7.6s

## 11 The Role of Convention

- @ Lewis, “Languages and Language” [M]
- \* Plato, *Cratylus* [r]

### Further Reading

Optional.

- \* Wittgenstein, *Tractatus* (1922), and *Philosophical Investigations* (1953)
- \* Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (1946)
- \* Quine, *Word and Object* (1960)
- \* Lewis, *Convention* (1969)
- \* Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (1980)
- \* Loar, *Mind and Meaning* (1981)
- \* Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (1982)
- \* Salmon, *Frege’s Puzzle* (1986)
- \* Neale, *Descriptions* (1990)
- \* Hale and Wright, *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (1997)
- \* Stroll, *Twentytiety Century Analytic Philosophy* (2000)
- \* Lycan, *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (2000)
- \* Soames, *Beyond Rigidity* (2002)
- \* Soames, *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century, Volume 1: The Dawn of Analysis*, and *Volume 2: The Age of Meaning* (both 2003)