Study Guide for the Midterm Examination

The midterm examination will be in-class, last fifty minutes, and will consist of some mixture of (1) True/False and “insert quotation” questions concerning use and mention, (2) multiple choice questions, (3) short answer questions, (4) at least one “Frege diagram”, and (5) a longer question in which I will ask you to explain and evaluate an argument that I present to you.

In what follows, you must distinguish between theories (for instance, the Mental Image Theory) and arguments (for instance, the Argument from Variability of Mental Images). Arguments have premises and conclusions, and the conclusion of a valid argument follows from its premises. Theories are simply unordered sets of claims. Theories do not have premises and conclusions, and a theory’s claims usually do not follow from one another. When I ask you to present a theory, I want you to state its main claims, and explain any technical terms that appear in your statement. See below for how to present an argument.

1. Define ‘Argument A is valid’ and ‘Argument A is sound’. Present an example of an argument that is valid but not sound (at least one of its premises should be obviously false). Present an argument that is invalid but has all obviously true premises.

2. Be prepared for True/False questions and “insert quotation mark” questions on use and mention (especially when used with Frege’s and Russell’s theories).

3. Present (state the main claims of) the Naive Theory of Meaning. Explain the term ‘Millianism’.

When I ask you to Present, Explain, and Evaluate (PEE) an argument, I want you to do the following:

(i) State (present) the argument: write it down in numbered premise and conclusion form.
(ii) Explain the argument line by line: Define any technical terms that appear in the argument. (These definitions may be given before presenting the argument.) Give reasons for the premises. Point out which lines are subconclusions. (Do not give reasons for the main conclusion.)
(iii) Evaluate the argument. State whether the simple arguments in the target argument are valid, and say why (give the names of the relevant argument forms). Then state whether the argument is sound. Usually, I will ask you to present and discuss some reasonable objection to one of the argument’s premises (regardless of whether you think it is sound). If so, be sure to say which premise you are criticizing.

4. Explain or otherwise define the phrase ‘differ in cognitive significance’ (e.g., “Two sentences differ in cognitive significance iff: . . .”). Present and explain the Objection
from Cognitive Significance against the Naive Theory (often known as “Frege’s Puzzles”). Evaluate it for validity. (You do not need to present an objection to it.)

5. Present and explain the following arguments against the Naive Theory: the Objection from Belief Ascriptions, the Objection from Meaningful Non-referring Proper Names, and the Objection from True Negative Existentials. Evaluate these for validity. (You do not need to present objections to them.)

6. Present (state the claims of) the Mental Image Theory of meaning (the final version that uses types of mental image). Give an illustrative example.

7. PEE the following arguments against the MIT: the Variability of Images Objection, the “Different Meanings But Same Image” Objection, and the No Associated Images Objection.

8. State Frege’s old metalinguistic theory of identity sentences. Present one objection to that theory (numbered premises and conclusions not required).

9. Present the main claims of Frege’s theory of sense and reference as presented in class. (These were presented in class after we finished Frege’s theory.)

10. State the principles of compositionality for sense and reference. Use the latter principle to give a (non-deductive) argument (without numbered premises and conclusion) for Frege’s claim that sentences refer to truth-values.

11. Be prepared to give a Frege-diagram for a sentence, using the notation for types of references that I used in class (“o”, “(o-v)”, “(<v, v>=v)”, “((o-v)=v)”, “((o-v)=o)”, “s_v”, “s_o”, etc.). Be prepared for sentences that contain proper names, one and two-place predicates, connectives (such as “and” and “or”), quantifiers (such as “something” and “everything”), ‘the’, and ‘that’-clauses. Graduate students: be prepared to give a verbal description of the exact references of expressions (e.g., “The function F from objects to truth-values such that for all x . . .”)

12. Explain how Frege’s theory avoids the problems raised for the Naive Theory by the objections you present in (4) and (5) above.


14. Present and explain four Russelian arguments against the DDD (the Objection from Cognitive significance, etc.). Evaluate these for validity. (You do not need to present objections to them.)

15. State the Principle of Substitution of Equals.
16. State the Law of Excluded Middle. Present an argument against the LEM that uses ‘The present king of France is bald’ and ‘The present king of France is not bald’.

17. Present Russell’s objection against Frege’s theory of definite descriptions. (You do not need to use numbered premises and conclusion for this.)

18. Present Meinong’s theory of definite descriptions. Explain why Russell thinks that this theory entails a contradiction.

19. Describe the proposition expressed by ‘Scott is bald’, and its constituents, on Russell’s theory (assuming that ‘Scott’ is a logically proper names). Symbolize the following sentences as Russell would: ‘Some man is bald’ and ‘Every man is bald’. Describe the propositions that these express and their constituents.

20. Symbolize ‘The present king of France is bald’ as Russell would, and describe the proposition that it expresses and its constituents.

21. Give Russell’s two symbolizations of ‘The present king of France is not bald’. State which is true and which is false. State which gives negation wide scope and which gives it narrow scope. State which gives the definite description wide scope and which gives it narrow scope. Be prepared to do the same for similar sentences containing both definite descriptions and negation, e.g., ‘The purple cow does not moo’.

22. Describe how Russell’s theory of Definite Descriptions avoids the problems that the DDD has with: cognitive significance (‘Scott is the author of Waverley’), attitude ascriptions (‘George IV wished to know whether Scott was the author of Waverley’), meaningful non-denoting definite descriptions (‘the present king of France’), and true negative existentials containing definite descriptions (‘The present king of France does not exist’).

23. Explain how Russell’s theory is consistent (if it is) with the Law of Excluded Middle.

24. Define ‘logically proper name’ as Russell uses that term. (“N is a logically proper name of O for A at time t iff: . . .”)

25. Explain why two (Russellian) logically proper names cannot differ in cognitive significance.