Philosophy of Language
Philosophy 328
Fall 2009, University at Buffalo
August 25, 2009

Instructor: David Braun
Time and Location: MWF 1:00-1:50 pm, Norton 218
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Office Hours: Mondays 2:00-4:00, and by appointment
Course Website: UBLearns

Words and sentences in English and other languages have meanings. That is why speakers can use sentences to communicate their thoughts, some of which are true. But what are meanings? What are the meanings of ‘Jimmy Carter’, ‘dog’, ‘red’, ‘waves’, ‘marry’, and ‘the’? How are meaning, reference, thought, communication, and truth related? How do words and sentences get their meanings and referents? We will begin this course by considering several theories about the nature of meaning and reference. We will then discuss communication and speech acts, the determination of word and sentence meaning, and skepticism about meaning. If time permits, we will end with applications of philosophy of language to ethics and law.

Prerequisites
The only formal prerequisite is one prior philosophy course. But this is an advanced course, and I will assume knowledge of philosophical terminology, argumentation, and methodology. I will use some symbolic logic, which I will explain as fully as possible in the time we have, but you may find this course easier if you have taken Philosophy 315 (Symbolic Logic).

Texts and Supplies
3. Readings on UBLearns
4. Four bluebooks, small size

Martinich, Lycan, and bluebooks can be purchased at the campus bookstore.

Required Work
1. Regular attendance and participation in class discussion.
2. A quiz on use and mention.
3. Two short papers, 3-5 pages, on assigned topics. **Tentative due dates**: Friday, October 2 and Friday, November 6.
4. A midterm examination. **Tentative date**: Wednesday, October 14.
5. A final examination covering the second half of the course, to be taken at a date, time, and location to be announced. **No exceptions.**
Grading
I will grade each assignment on a 100-point scale. At the end of the term, I will calculate a numerical score for each student, using the weights for each assignment given below. I will use the resulting numerical scores to assign letter grades.

1. Quiz on use/mention 5%
2. First short paper 20%
3. Second short paper 25%
4. Midterm exam 25%
5. Final exam 25%

Examinations
The examinations will consist of a mixture of true-false, multiple-choice, short-answer, and short-essay questions. Make-up exams (if any) will be long-essay exams, and will be offered only to those who have appropriate excuses and appropriate documentation.

Final Exam
All students must take the final exam at the scheduled date and time. There will be no exceptions. You should arrange your travel plans for the end of the semester accordingly.

Conflicts
Those of you who have out-of-town commitments due to membership in a college organization (e.g., sports teams) must let me know no later than the second week of class if you anticipate having a commitment that conflicts with an exam.

In-Class Announcements, E-mail Announcements, and UBLearns
I will make various announcements in class, including reading assignments, changes to due dates for papers, and dates for the midterm and final examinations. I will also periodically e-mail announcements through UBLearns. You will be responsible for all of these announcements. Some of them will appear on the class’s UBLearns site.

Contacting Me
Please use e-mail to contact me: dbraun2@buffalo.edu. Use your buffalo.edu e-mail account and put “Philosophy of Language” or something similar in the subject line. I am likely to delete messages from non-buffalo.edu accounts.

Special Needs
If you have a disability that you think requires special accommodations (e.g., note-takers or extended time on exams), then inform me immediately and contact Disability Services, 25 Capen Hall, 645-2608, to receive documentation of your disability. You are responsible for notifying me and assuring that I receive documentation from DS by the end of the second week of class.
Academic Honesty and Student Conduct
I expect you to conform to all University policies regarding academic honesty and conduct. For information about UB’s policies, see the following URLs.
Academic Integrity: http://academicintegrity.buffalo.edu/policies/index.php
Student Conduct: http://www.ub-judiciary.buffalo.edu/rulereg.php

Topics and Approximate Schedule
I will periodically make reading assignments from the following list, at approximately the times indicated. There may be additions or subtractions to the readings, and some topics may be omitted, depending on discussion, time, and interest. I abbreviate the names of our readings as follows: M = Martinich, L = Lycan, UBL = UBLearns, K = Kripke’s Naming and Necessity (the book). The dates given below for assignments and exams are tentative.

1. The Naive Theory and Millianism (Aug 31 - Sep 11)
L: Chapter 1, pp. 1-8.
Recommended: UBL, Braun, “Names and Natural Kind Terms”, sections 1 and 2.

📅 No Class on Monday, September 7 (Labor Day)📅
📅 No Class on Friday, September 11 (I will be at a conference)📅

2. The Idea Theory (Sep 14 - Sep 16)
M: Locke, “Of Words”.
L: Chapter 6, pp. 78-80.

3. Frege (Sep 18 - Sep 23)
Recommended: M, Frege, the remainder of “On Sense & Nominatum”. UBL, Braun, “Frege and Russell”, section on Frege.

4. Russell (Sep 25 - Oct 2)
UBL: Russell, “Knowledge by Acquaintance and by Description”.
L: Chapter 2, pp. 13-25.
Recommended: UBL, Braun, “Frege and Russell”, section on Russell.

📅 No Class on Monday, September 28 (Yom Kippur)📅
📅 First Paper Due Friday, October 2📅

5. Kripke, Anti-Descriptivism, and Direct Reference (Oct 5 - Oct 9)
M: Kripke, selection from “Naming and Necessity”.
L: Chapter 3, all of it. Chapter 4, pp. 52-66.
UBL: Searle, “Proper Names”.

7. Speech Acts (Oct 12 – Oct 16)

✈️ Midterm examination on Wednesday, October 14 ✈️

8. Pragmatics and Conversational Implicature (Oct 19 – Oct 21)
M: Grice, “Logic and Conversation.”
L: Chapter 13, pp. 187-204.
UBL: Bach, “Conversational Implicitude”.

✈️ Second Paper Due Friday, November 6 ✈️

M: Donnellan, “Reference and Definite Descriptions”.
UBL: Kripke, “Speaker Reference and Semantic Reference”.
L: Chapter 2, “Objections to Russell’s Theory” and “Donnellan’s Distinction”.

✈️ Final Examination: Date, Time, and Location To Be Announced ✈️

10. Communicative Intentions and Meaning (Oct 30 - Nov 2)
M: Grice, “Meaning.”
L: Chapter 7, pp. 100-114.
Recommended: M, Lewis, “Languages and Language”.

11. Skepticism About Meaning: Rule Following (Nov 4 – Nov 9)

12. Philosophy of Language and Ethics (Nov 11 – Nov 16)
UBL: Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms”. Geach, “Ascriptivism”.

13. Philosophy of Language and the Law (Nov 18 – Nov 23)
UBL: Soames, “Interpreting Legal Texts”.