

## CCNM17-105: Philosophy of Language Course Description

### Aim of the course

**Aim of the course:** Our words, sentences are about—refer to—things in the world: objects, people, events. Plausibly, the meanings of expressions play a central role in explaining this referential feature: for example, it is in virtue of the meaning of the word 'horse' that it refers to horses. But what exactly does this role played by meaning consist in? The answer is not at all straightforward. Consider these two sentences:

Mark Twain was a famous novelist.

Samuel Clemens was a famous novelist.

How does the meaning of the first sentence differ from the meaning of the second? After all, both are about the same individual: who was called Samuel Clemens but became famous under the pseudonym 'Mark Twain'. Yet—according to Gottlob Frege—the two sentences cannot have the same meaning because someone may rationally believe one (the first, say), without believing the other. This is what Frege's "puzzle" consists in, providing the starting point for 20th-century philosophy of language. In the seminar, our aim is to gain a greater understanding of the nature of meaning, and its relation to reference, truth, communication.

### Learning outcome, competences

knowledge:

- knows the introductory theories of Philosophy of Language
- 

attitude:

- is sensitive to and interested in noticing phenomenas and problems of Philosophy of Language

skills:

- comprehensive methodological knowledge
- ability to test theoretical questions and for relevant hypotheses
- 

### Content of the course

#### Topics of the course

- 1. Introduction
- 2. Frege on sense and reference
- 3. Russell and Strawson on definite descriptions
- 4. Kripke and Putnam on meaning and reference
- 5. Grice on meaning
- 6. Grice on communication.
- 7. An application of Grice's proposal about communication: racism and language use

#### Learning activities, learning methods

Lectures and interactive discussions

### Evaluation of outcomes

#### Learning requirements, mode of evaluation, criteria of evaluation:

requirements

- 50-80 pages of reading for each week

- – at the beginning of (almost) every seminar, a short quiz (these count towards 10% of the final grade)
- – posting 2 questions/comments at the course discussion forum for each class (10%)
- – class participation (worth 20%)
- – writing 4 short (2-3-page-long) response papers during the semester (the best 3 of these go towards 30% of
- the final grade)
- – Once during the semester, acting as MC (Master of Ceremonies) (this involves introducing the readings as well as students' questions and comments, worth 30%)
- 

mode of evaluation: examination and practical course mark

criteria of evaluation:

- 
- 

<b>Reading list</b>
---------------------

**Compulsory reading list**

- Lycan, W. (Ed.) (2000). *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*. London: Routledge.
- Martinich, P. (Ed.) (1996). *The Philosophy of Language*. Oxford: OUP.

- 

**Recommended reading list**

- 
-