

Philosophy of Linguistics

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Meetings The class meetings are from 11:00 to 13:00 each Wednesday from 19th September to 28th November. Class meetings are mandatory.

Readings Required reading is to be done **before** the class meets; background reading to be studied as time and specific interests permit.

Assessment (i) short paper (1000-1500 words) to be turned in by 5 p.m. on Monday 15th October (topics will be provided); (ii) final essay examination with choice of questions from the whole of the course.

Week 1 (19th September): Introduction

What linguistics is. Linguistics as a special science. Syntax and semantics as conceived in logic. Charles Morris's trichotomy of syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. Philosophy of science applied to linguistics.

Required reading

- Hunter, Geoffrey (1971) *Metalogic: An Introduction to the Metatheory of Standard First Order Logic* (Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 4–13.

Background reading

- Stainton, Robert (2014) 'Philosophy of linguistics', *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Online at <https://works.bepress.com/robertstainton/126/>

Week 2 (26th September): Language and languages

The metaphysics of linguistics. The vexed question of whether language should be regarded as psychological, social, or purely abstract. The descriptive linguistics of the American structuralists and the mentalist/cognitive backlash; 'God's truth' (realism) vs. 'hocus-pocus' (antirealism). Katz's revival of the medieval 'nominalist'- 'conceptualist'- 'platonist' trichotomy.

Required reading

- Santana, Carlos (2016) 'What is Language?' *Ergo* 3.19, open access (DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3998/ergo.12405314.0003.019>).
- Hockett, Charles F. (1948) 'A note on "structure"', *International Journal of American Linguistics* 14, 269–271; reprinted in a classic anthology of American structuralism: Martin Joos (ed.), *Readings in Linguistics I* (University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 279–280.

Background reading

- Lewis, David (1983) 'Languages and language', in his *Philosophical Papers, Volume I*, Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 163–188.

Week 3 (3rd October): Words and expressions

What are linguistic expressions? Words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. The theoretical role of words in linguistics. Orthography, phonology, etymology, sense; morphology and the distinction between lexemes and word-forms. The metaphysics of words; types versus tokens; identity conditions for linguistic types. Unspoken words? The evolution, creation, and death of words.

Required reading

- Nefdt, Ryan (2018) 'What words are', MS, University of the Western Cape, available at <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/~gpullum/Nefdt/WhatWordsAre.pdf>

Background reading

- §2 and §4.2 of Wetzell, Linda (2014) 'Types and tokens', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2014 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2014/entries/types-tokens/>.
- §1 of Kaplan, David (1990) 'Words', *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 64(1): 93–119.

Week 4 (10th October): Grammars and syntax

What generative grammars are. Potential alternatives to generative grammars. Fallacies of reasoning about infinitude.

Required reading

- Pullum, Geoffrey K. and Barbara C. Scholz (2005) 'Contrasting applications of logic in natural language syntactic description.' In Petr Hájek, Luis Valdés-Villanueva, and Dag Westerståhl (eds.), *Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science: Proceedings of the Twelfth International Congress*, 481–503. London: College Publications, Department of Computer Science, King's College London. Online at: <http://ling.ed.ac.uk/~gpullum/bcscholz/Contrasting.pdf>
Or alternatively:
- Pullum, Geoffrey K. (2013) 'The central question in comparative syntactic metatheory', *Mind and Language* 28(4), 492–521. Online at <http://www.lel.ed.ac.uk/~gpullum/Metatheory.pdf>

Background reading

- Freidin, Robert (2012) 'A brief history of generative grammar', in Gillian Russell and Delia Graff Fara (eds.) *The Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Language* (Section 7, Chapter 8), 895–916.
- Pullum, Geoffrey K. and Barbara C. Scholz (2010) Recursion and the infinitude claim. In Harry van der Hulst (ed.), *Recursion in Human Language* (Studies in Generative Grammar 104; Mouton de Gruyter, Berlin), 113–138.

Week 5 (17th October): Language and thought

Language and thought; the issue of whether language or thought has priority; the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis — linguistic determinism and linguistic relativity.

Required reading

- Reines, Maria Francisca, and Jesse Prinz (2009), 'Reviving Whorf: the return of linguistic relativity', *Philosophy Compass*, 4: 1022–1032.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1747-9991.2009.00260.x>

Background reading

- §4 of Scholz, Barbara C., Geoffrey K. Pullum, and Francis Jeffry Pelletier (2015) 'Philosophy of linguistics', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/linguistics/>

Week 6 (24th October): Language and the world

What is the aim of semantic theory? What form should a semantic theory take? What is linguistic meaning? What are the semantic phenomena? Meaning, truth conditions, and possible worlds. Propositions and entailment. Model theory; productivity; compositionality.

Required reading

- Ball, D. and Rabern, B. (2018) 'Introduction to the Science of Meaning', in *The Science of Meaning*, Oxford, pp. 1–44.

Background reading

- Partee, B. H. (2011). Formal semantics: Origins, issues, early impact. *Baltic International Yearbook of Cognition, Logic and Communication*, 6(1), 13.
- Lewis, David (1970) 'General Semantics', *Synthese*, 22(1–2), 18–67.

Week 7 (31st October): The rule-following paradox

The Kripke-Wittgenstein rule-following paradox. Chomsky's dismissal and rejection of the idea that language is normative. Crispin Wright's response.

Required reading Noam Chomsky (1985)

- *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin and Use* (Praeger, Westport CT), Chapter 4.
- Wright, Crispin (1989) 'Wittgenstein's rule-following considerations and the Central Project of theoretical linguistics', in Alexander George, ed., *Reflections on Chomsky* (Basil Blackwell, Oxford), 233–264.

Background reading

- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (1953) *Philosophical Investigations* (Macmillan, New York), §185–§243.
- Kripke (1982) *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, Harvard University Press.
- Wilson, George (2006) 'Rule following, meaning and normativity', in Lepore and Smith (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Language*, 2006. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199552238.003.0007>

Week 8 (7th November): Language and proper function

Teleosemantics: Ruth Millikan's view of normativity and its relation to the biological notion of proper function.

Required reading

- Millikan, Ruth Garrett (1990) 'Truth rules, hoverflies, and the Kripke-Wittgenstein paradox' *The Philosophical Review* 99, 323–353. On the web at <http://www.uh.edu/~garson/Hoverflies.pdf>

Background reading

- Neander, Karen (2018) 'Teleological Theories of Mental Content', Edward N. Zalta (ed.), *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2018 Edition), URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/content-teleological>

Week 9 (14th November): Acquisition and nativism

Rationalism vs. empiricism in philosophy; the 'innate ideas' doctrine; problems with the notion of innateness; grammar induction by algorithm; analysis of the 'argument from poverty of the stimulus'.

Required reading

- Scholz, Barbara C. and Geoffrey K. Pullum (2006), 'Irrational nativist exuberance', in Robert Stainton (ed.), *Contemporary Debates in Cognitive Science*, 59–80. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Background reading

- §5 of Scholz/Pullum/Pelletier (2015) 'Philosophy of linguistics', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/linguistics/>
- Gleitman, Lila R., & Elissa L. Newport, (1995), 'The invention of language by children: Environmental and biological influences on the acquisition of language', *An invitation to cognitive science: Volume 1, Language*, 1–24.
- Fiona Cowie (2008) 'Innateness and language', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/innateness-language/>

Week 10 (21st November): Evidence and epistemology

The nature of the evidence for linguistics. Intuitions of grammaticality and meaning. The reliability of intuitions. Corpora: their gaps and errors. Reflective equilibrium as a methodology.

Required reading

- §3 of Scholz/Pullum/Pelletier (2015) 'Philosophy of linguistics', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/linguistics/>
- Michael Devitt (2006), 'Intuitions in linguistics', *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* **57**, 481-513.

Background reading

- Fitzgerald, Gareth (2010), 'Linguistic Intuitions', *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* **61.1**, 123–160.
- Daniels, Norman (2016) 'Reflective equilibrium', *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reflective-equilibrium>
- Pullum, Geoffrey K. (2017) 'Theory, data, and the epistemology of syntax', *Grammatische Variation: Empirische Zugänge und theoretische Modellierung* (Institut für Deutsche Sprache, Jahrbuch 2016), ed. by Marek Konopka and Angelika Wöllstein, 283–298. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Jacobson, Pauline (2018) 'What is—or, for that matter, isn't—"experimental" semantics?' (in press).

Week 11 (28th November): Review and exam preparation

Review (no new reading for this week)