PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE  1/18/19

PHIL 306G -01    Class meets M-W 2:30-4:00 Classroom: Eads 203.
Instructor: Professor Roy Sorensen  sorensen@wustl.edu
Office hours: Mondays 4:15 to 5:45 or by appointment
Phone: (314) 935-7914    Office: Wilson Hall 206

MTE instructor Chris Colacchia, ccolacc@wustl.edu
Office hours: Wednesdays 1 to 2:30 or by appointment in 116 Wilson

Texts: Michael Morris An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language
       There will also be articles assigned which will be available on the web or through
       Blackboard. These will be specified as the course progresses.
       Three helpful alternative introductions: Philosophy of Language by Zoltán Gendler Szabó
       and Richmond H. Thomason, William Lycan’s Philosophy of Language, Colin
       McGinn’s Philosophy of Language: The Classics Explained. None of these are required.
       They are useful for alternative presentations of difficult points and provide more detail
       for your essays.

Generic course Description: The course begins with reasons why philosophers have been
interested in language. Many of these motives stem from anthropology, psychology, linguistics
and political theory. We will continue on to a survey of major philosophical problems concerning
meaning, reference, and truth as they have been addressed within the analytic tradition. Readings
that represent diverse positions on these focal issues will be selected from the work of leading
philosophers in the field, for example: Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Davidson, Quine, Kripke, and
Putnam. Students are encouraged to engage critically the ideas and arguments presented, and to
develop and defend their own views on the core topics. A previous course in logic is
recommended but not required. Prerequisites: one course in Philosophy at the 100 or 200-level, or
permission of the instructor.

Grading and Assignments: Your grade will determined mechanically by your net number of
points:

392 = A+   348 = B+   308 = C+   268 = D+   below 240 =F
376 = A  336 = B  296 = C  256= D
360 = A-  320 = B-  280 = C-  240 = D-

Note: If you are taking the course with a Pass/Fail option, please be aware that in order to pass the course you must receive a grade of C or above.

How to gain points:
There are two essays, midterm and a final. Each is worth 100 points. There is an optional oral presentation (about twenty minutes) to the class worth a maximum of 10 bonus points. The bonus must fit the class schedule. Reserve a time by March 5 (after the midterm) to guarantee a slot. Propose a topic to the instructor. This may be coupled with an article for the class to read.

Each paper should be no longer than 2000 words. Optional drafts will be read provided they are submitted one week before the due date. Topic questions will be provided.

Here is the format for the essay examinations. A week before the test you will be given a long list of preparation questions. On test day you will be given a list of eight questions. You will choose five to answer. At least two of these questions will be from the preparation list. Each answer will be worth twenty points. During the class session before the test, I will set aside some time to answer clarificatory questions about the items on the list. That is, I will disambiguate, precisify, and in general respond to worries about misunderstanding the questions. Of course, I do not intend to provide substantive answers. On exam day, you need only bring a pen. I will supply the paper. Group study is permitted. For a sample of questions and model answers, go to http://www.criticism.com/linguistics/philosophy-of-language-answers.html

How to Lose Points:
Lateness: Lateness will be penalized by 5 points for each session behind schedule. There are two ways to avoid this penalty. First, you can receive an extension from the instructor. Second, you can present a documentable excuse within two weeks of the due date. Difficulties over possible lateness are best handled by notifying the instructor early. I am reluctant to grant an incomplete. In addition to raising questions of fairness to the other students and creating a nuisance for the instructor, incomplete grades have a strong tendency to become failing grades.

Plagiarism: There are now web sites that vet papers for plagiarism. I will be taking advantage of this service. Plagiarism is an extreme offence that is not taken lightly by the university. It covers any attempt to represent someone else’s ideas as your own.

Plagiarism can involve:
• Copying your paper or sections of your paper from a friend, off a website, or out of a book without proper citation.
• Paraphrasing someone else's presentation or idea without giving proper citation.

If you are caught plagiarizing, whether it was done intentionally or not, you will, at the very least, automatically fail the course. Additionally, the case will be brought to the attention of the university officials at which point a dismissal from the university, for disciplinary reasons, is a possibility. If you have further questions about plagiarism please ask, so that you can avoid a possibly very unpleasant situation. Alternatively, check out WUSTL’s policies on plagiarism at https://acadinfo.wustl.edu/WUCRSLFrontMatter/WebWUCRSLInfo_AcadIntegrity.htm

Laptop use correlates with lower grades.
A plausible causal explanation is the distractions of email, facebook, and web surfing.
Absences also correlate with lower grades. Absences lower performance and then lower performance increases absences, yielding a downward spiral. For a meta-analysis, see: http://rer.sagepub.com/content/80/2/272.short

Syllabus Revisions: This syllabus is provisional, especially as I project further out into the future. There will definitely be revisions – some of which can be based on student suggestions. I will try to provide students with at least one week's notice of additions or deletions from the syllabus.

Calendar for Philosophy of Language  (The schedule will be revised and supplemented)
01/14 Monday          Session 1
Course Mechanics
Vagueness and the sorites paradox - Chris Colacchia
The Rationalist View of Language: Socrates on the Role of Definitions and Names
01/16 Wednesday       Session 2
The Empiricist View of Language
Read Morris pages 1-10 on John Locke before this class
01/23 Wednesday       Session 3
Read Morris pages 11-20 Challenges for the Empiricist View
View videos whose URLs are in “Videos on ideas and words”
01/28 Monday          Session 4
Morris, 21-28 Frege’s criticism of psychologism
Jennifer Saul “Feminist Philosophy of Language” Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-language/
01/30 Wednesday       Session 5
Read Morris, 29-48 Frege on the sense reference distinction
02/04 Monday          Session 6
Morris, 49-61 Russell’s theory of definite descriptions
02/06 Wednesday       Session 7
Morris, 61-74 Criticisms of Russell by Strawson and Donnellan
02/11 Monday          Session 8
Morris, 74-89 Saul Kripke’s theory of proper names
02/13 Wednesday       Session 9
Morris, 90-112 Natural Kind Terms
02/18 Monday          Session 10
Morris 113-126 Quine’s Three Grades of Modal Involvement
Midterm preparation questions distributed
02/20 Wednesday       Session 11 Optional paper I draft is due Feb, 20
Morris 126-133 Quine’s logical and metaphysical objections to de re necessity
02/25 Monday          Session 12
Morris 134-151 Reference and Propositional Attitudes

02/27 Wednesday       Session 13
MID-TERM IS ON FEB. 27

03/4 Monday          Session 14
Morris 152-169 , Semantics of Propositional Attitudes
Deadline for scheduling the extra credit presentation is March 5
03/6 Wednesday Session 15
Morris 170 - 193, Davidson on truth and meaning  PAPER 1 DUE on March 6

++++ March 10 to 16 Spring break ++++++++

03/18 Monday Session 16
Morris 194-213 Quine and Davidson on Translation

03/20 Wednesday Session 17
Donald Davidson on Conceptual Schemes
Read “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” from Blackboard

03/25 Monday Session 18
Morris 214-230, Quine on the Indeterminacy of Translation

03/27 Wednesday Session 19
04/1 Monday  Session 20
Austin on Speech Acts
Morris 231-247

04/03 Wednesday Session 21
Grice on meaning
Morris chapter 13

04/8 Monday Session 22
Indirect Speech Acts
Read Pinker Steven Pinker “The Evolutionary social psychology of off-record indirect speech acts”

04/10 Wednesday Session 23  Optional paper 1 draft is due 4/10
Kripke on the rule-following paradox

Morris Chapter 14
04/15 Monday Session 24
Wittgenstein on the Augustinian picture
Morris chapter 15
04/17 Wednesday Session 25  PAPER 2 DUE on April 17
Read Donald Davidson “On What Metaphors Mean”
04/22 Monday Session 26
Metaphor
Preparation Questions Distributed
04/24 Wednesday Session 27
Malapropisms and Misspeaking
Donald Davidson“A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs
Clarification of Preparation Questions

Final Examination May 6, 2019 3:30PM - 5:30PM