

**Phil 4311: Philosophy of Language**  
Spring 2020, University of Texas, El Paso  
Class Meets: M, W 9:00—10:20 p.m., UGLC 336

**Contact Information**

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& by appointment.

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**Course Description**

The philosopher Michael Dummett has suggested that, beginning with the work of Russell, Frege, and Wittgenstein, philosophy of language became “first philosophy” – that is, the area of philosophical study that was prior to our foundational for all other fields of philosophy (not to mention science). Although few, if any, philosophers agree with this assessment, Dummett’s claim is not without merit. After all, a key part of language is that it purports to represent the world. For instance, the sentence “Donald Trump is president” will be true if and only if the world is the way this sentence says it is. The same point holds for any claim, philosophical or scientific. Thus, understanding the representational nature of language goes a long way toward understanding the structure of world itself.

Unfortunately for this line of thought, the relationship between our words and the world is far more complicated than we ever imagined.

**Required Materials**

Required Texts

- Cappelen & Dever. 2016. *Context and Communication*. Oxford: OUP
- Cappelen & Dever. 2018. *Puzzles of Reference*. Oxford: OUP
- Cappelen & Dever. 2019. *Bad Language*. Oxford: OUP
- A course packet available electronically on Blackboard.

**Course Objectives**

- To develop a critical understanding of Epistemology.
- To develop an ability to clearly express and defend not only your own opinions on these matters, but also the views and arguments of those with whom you disagree.

**Requirements and Expectations**

This course is an upper division philosophy course. Students will be expected to have academic skills commensurate with its level including: the ability to read complex primary source material, the ability to write clear, well-constructed essays, and the ability to engage in articulate and respectful discourse. In addition, I expect all students to be prepared and attentive in class. This means coming to class having done reading assignments and having thought about their significance, and while in class being an active listener and contributor. Although I will not take attendance, I do expect you

attend every class meeting and to arrive on time. You are responsible for all material and announcements made in class, whether you are present or not. No late assignments will be allowed without a University excuse.

PLEASE NOTE: If you have or suspect you have a physical, learning, or psychological disability and require accommodations, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services located in the Union Bldg East, room 106 (747-5148).

**Evaluation:**

- **Two Short Expository Papers (20% of total grade each):** 2-3 page expository-cum-critical paper. The student will choose a topic from one of the books which has not been covered in class.
- **Midterm and Final Exams (25% of total grade):** In class short answer exams.
- **Participation (10% of total grade):** Students are required to make substantive and informed comments and/or ask appropriately trenchant questions concerning the course material each class. I will keep track of classroom discussion and give marks for such contributions. There are approximately 25 days in class. Students will be able to receive a maximum of 20 points for their seminar contributions. Grade scale works like this: A – 18-20; B – 16-17; C – 14-15; D – 12-13; F - >12.

The grading scale for this class is given below:

A	B	C	D	F
>89.5%	>79.5%	>69.5%	>59.5%	≤59.5%

**Academic Integrity**

Academic integrity is a concern for everyone. By joining the UTEP community every student agrees to abide by the Scholastic Dishonesty Policy. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable to another person.

**Cheating**

- Copying from the test paper of another student
- Communicating with another student during a test
- Giving or seeking aid from another student during a test
- Possession and/or use of unauthorized materials during tests (i.e. Crib notes, class notes, books, etc)
- Substituting for another person to take a test
- Falsifying research data, reports, academic work offered for credit

**Plagiarism**

- Using someone's work in your assignments without the proper citations
- Submitting the same paper or assignment from a different course, without direct permission of instructors

**Collusion**

- Unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing academic assignments

**Class Schedule:** The following is a detailed schedule of classes. The schedule, however, is flexible. I will freely amend it as time, interest and comprehension dictate.

**CC** = *Context and Communication*

**PR** = *Puzzles of Reference*

**BL** = *Bad Language*

**CP** = Course Packet.

W Jan. 22 Introduction

1. Meaning

M Jan. 27 The Intentional Theory of Meaning

- **CP**, Grice, H. P. 1957. "Meaning," *The Philosophical Review*, **66**: 377-388
- **CP**, Grice, H. P. 1969. "Utterer's meaning and intention," *The Philosophical Review*, **78**: 147-177.

W Jan. 29 The Intentional Theory of Meaning Cont'd

- **CP**, Lewis, D, XXXX. ""

2. Language and Context

M Feb. 03 Context Sensitivity of Language

- **CC**, Chapter 1

W Feb. 05 Against Context Sensitivity

- **CC**, Chapter 2

M Feb. 10 Possible Solutions

- **CC**, Chapter 3

3. Semantics for Natural Language

W Feb. 12 Descriptivism

- **PR**, Ch. 1.1
- **CP**, Frege, G. 1948. "On sense and reference," *The Philosophical Review*, **57**: 209-230

M Feb. 17 Against Descriptivism

- **PR**, Ch. 1.2-1.6
- **CP**, Kripke, S. 1972. Excerpts from *Naming and Necessity*

W Feb. 19 The Causal Theory of Names

- Same as previous

M Feb. 24 Frege's Puzzle and a Responses

- **PR**, Ch. 2.1-2.6
- **CP**, Kripke, S. 1979. "A puzzle about belief," in Margalit (ed.), *Meaning and Use*. Dordrecht, Holland: Reidel

W Feb. 26 Reference Magnetism

- **PR**, Ch. 5

M Mar. 02 Truth-Conditional Semantics

- **CC**, Ch. 4

W Mar. 04 Kaplan Semantics for Indexicals

- **CC**, Ch. 5

M Mar. 09 Review

W Mar. 11 Mid-term Exam

M Mar. 16 Spring Break

W	Mar. 18	Spring Break
M	Mar. 23	Contexts
	➤	CC, Ch. 9
W	Mar. 25	Generating Context
	➤	CC, Ch. 11
M	Mar. 30	Non-Ideal Language
	➤	BL, Ch. 1 and Ch. 2
	➤	CP, Grice, H. P. 1975. "Logic and conversation"
W	Apr. 01	Lying
	➤	BL, Ch. 3
M	Apr. 06	Bullshit
	➤	BL, Ch. 4
W	Apr. 08	Slurs and Pejoratives
	➤	BL, Ch. 6
M	Apr. 13	Slurs and Pejoratives Cont'd
W	Apr. 15	Lexical Effects
	➤	BL, Ch. 7
M	Apr. 20	Lexical Effects Cont'd
W	Apr. 22	Oppression and Silencing
	➤	BL, Ch. 10
M	Apr. 27	Oppression and Silencing Cont'd
W	Apr. 29	TBD
M	May 04	TBD
W	May 06	Review
W	May 13	Final Exam – 10:00-11:20