**COURSE INFORMATION**
Spring 2011: Intro to Philosophy of Language
PHIL 129: 001 [MWF 10.10-11.00]: [216 Boucke]

**CONTACT INFORMATION**
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Office hours: W 11.00-12.00
Office Location: 228 Sparks

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<th>Texts</th>
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<td>Agler, David W.</td>
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* Notes Optional Reading Available in ANGEL

## PART I — SINGULAR REFERENCE

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## PART II — THEORIES OF MEANING

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<td>Feb 14 – 18</td>
<td>Chapter 5, Lycan <em>(Traditional Theories of Meaning)</em>, pp.65-75. **Due: Short Paper #1</td>
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<td>Feb 21 – 25</td>
<td>Chapter 6, Lycan <em>(“Use” Theories)</em>, pp.76-85</td>
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1. Course Description

Although philosophical considerations about language has occurred throughout the history of philosophy (e.g. Plato’s Cratylus or Aristotle’s On Interpretation), from around the turn of the 20th century, philosophy of language has become one of the central fields of philosophy (alongside epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science). In the early to middle part of the 20th century, philosophy of language was occupied primarily with questions about meaning and whether a proper analysis of language would dissolve traditional philosophical questions. Two traditions emerged. IDEAL LANGUAGE PHILOSOPHERS claimed that philosophical problems could be eliminated by constructing a more purified and logical form of language. The working assumption was that philosophical problems were really the result of various ambiguities or violations operating in the semantics of natural language. Removing these problems by constructing a non-ambiguous and precise
semantics allowed for dissolving philosophy entirely (i.e. speculative metaphysics). ORDINARY LANGUAGE
PHILOSOPHERS claimed that philosophical problems could be eliminated by greater attention to how language is
commonly or ordinarily used. Philosophical problems were the result of using common expressions in an
uncommon, perverse, or jargon-laden fashion. By attending to the normal use of language, the ordinary language
tradition claimed to furnish dissolutions to the mind-body problem (Ryle), eradicate arguments supporting the sense-
data theory (Austin), and undermine essentialism (Wittgenstein).

During the latter part of the 1950s and into the 1960s and 1970s, both traditions began to pay more
attention to language in its own right and less on its use to dissolve traditional philosophical problems or philosophy
altogether. What emerged out of both traditions was a blending of the two camps into two complementary
disciplines: FORMAL SEMANTICS and CONTEMPORARY PRAGMATICS. In broad outline, the primary objective of the
former is to provide an account of the sentence meaning (what is said), reference, and truth-conditions of linguistic
expressions, while the objective of the latter is to provide an account of speaker meaning (what is meant),
communication, and how the use of an expression affects hearers. The two domains are complementary insofar as
those working in formal semantics no longer believe that the meaning of a word/sentence can be explained in
complete abstraction from its contextual use, while those working in contemporary pragmatics tend to accept the
Gricean distinction between what is said and what is implicated (or at least not reduce meaning to use). In this
course, we will investigate some basic philosophical questions having to do with language: (1) how does language
refer to reality (theories of reference), (2) what (if any) is the nature of meaning (theories of meaning), (3) how
much does contextual factors bear upon what is said (theories of the semantic / pragmatic interface).

2. Grade Evaluation, Scale, Breakdown

Grades will be rounded up from the second decimal point, e.g. 90.95 rounds up to 91.0 while 90.94 rounds down to
90.90. In the event that eLION does not allow for a particular grade (e.g. D+), you will simply be given the letter
grade (e.g. if you have a D+ then you will receive a D, and if you have a C–, you will receive a C).

A: 91–100%;  C+: 79.0–79.9  F: 0–59.9
A–: 90.0–90.9  C: 71.0–77.9  INCOMPLETE
B+: 89.0–89.9  C–: 70–70.9  DROP
B: 81.0–88.9  D+: 69.0–69.9
B–: 80–80.9  D: 60.0–68.9

3. Explanation of Evaluation

There are four components to this course: (1) Participation / Attendance / Podcast, (2) Two Short Papers, (3)
Examinations, and (4) Final Paper.

3.1. Participation / Attendance / Podcast (20%)

Since the course is a combination of lecture and seminar format, regular and active participation is required.
Although it is not essential that you have mastered the text, you are expected to have read the assignment before
attending class and have made notes for which passages, terms, or arguments you think are important. In addition,
you will be required to post one podcast (audio/visual) that provides a quick summary of the week’s reading and
classroom discussion. A rubric will be provided in class.

3.2. Online / Classroom Examinations (15%)

Assignments in the form of an examination (online or in-class) will be assigned periodically throughout the course.
These quizzes will test a very rudimentary understanding of the philosophical texts and your comprehension of
writing skills learned in this course. In preparation for quizzes, it is necessary that you have done the reading and
have a general idea of its major claim(s), along with the mainline of its supporting argument. Some quizzes will
allow you to make use of the text in question (and your notes), so it is to your advantage if you (1) bring the relevant
texts to class and (2) mark or highlight the major claims/arguments of the text.

3.3. Two Short Papers (25%)
You will be asked to write two, short (1000 words) papers for this course. Each paper is geared around a writing workshop which is designed to develop your ability in summarize a text, argue for a particular thesis, or organize your thoughts. The assignments are developmental, so you will be regularly asked to employ skills that you have learned earlier in the course. In addition, you will be required to attend a peer-review session before you turn in your paper.

3.4. Paper Proposal, Final Paper & Presentation (40%)

The ultimate goal of this course is a final paper (roughly 3000–4000 words) which organizes and synthesizes your previous work around a thesis supported by a coherent, concise, and well-reasoned argument. This paper should include at least the following five components: (1) the use of metadiscourse, (2) a bibliography, (3) at least one clearly identifiable argument, (4) the effective use of quotations, and (5) additional research (see optional articles on ANGEL). While the exact claim and theme of the paper is subject to your discretion, your paper must relate to one of the principal topics of the course and you will be required to submit a paper proposal in advance. In addition to the final paper and proposal, you will be asked to prepare a digital presentation of your paper. This can be a video of you explaining the main theme of your paper, an audio (.mp3) file where you present your paper by giving a short, audio summary of your thesis and its supporting arguments, or some

4. Late Work

If you are planning on taking a Test/Notebook/Paper late, you will need to clear this with the instructor before the day and time of the test. If the instructor is not informed that you will be taking the test late, a grade reduction of one letter grade is incurred for every day the test is late. So if the due date is Tuesday at 3p.m. and you email me on Tuesday at 3.01p.m., you will lose a letter grade. You will not lose an additional letter grade until 3.01p.m. the next day (i.e. Wednesday).

5. Guides to Philosophical Literature

In preparing your final paper, you will be required to do a minimal amount of additional research / reading.

5.1 General Guides


5.2 Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, & Biographical Sources


5.3 Directories for Journal Articles
5.4 Undergraduate Journals in Philosophy

After receiving comments and suggestions on your work, you may be interested in submitting your paper to a conference or an undergraduate journal.

Aporia: http://aporia.byu.edu/site.php?id=current
Episteme: http://www.denison.edu/academics/departments/philosophy/episteme.html
The Lyceum: http://lyceumphilosophy.com/

6. Additional Administrative Information

6.1. Academic Misconduct

The general principles and policy relating to cheating and plagiarism, which are enforced in this class, can be found in the Penn State policy on academic misconduct. Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty encompasses a wide range of activities, whether intentional or unintentional, that includes, but is not limited to: all forms of fraud, plagiarism, and any failure to cite explicitly all materials and sources used in one’s work. Sanctions for these activities include, but are not limited to, failure in a course, removal from the degree program, failure in a course with an explanation in the permanent transcript of the cause for failure, suspension, and expulsion. If you are unclear about whether you or someone you know is engaging in academic misconduct, read the following: University Statement on Academic Integrity

6.2 Other Resources on Academic Misconduct

PSU Academic Integrity
PSU ITTS: Plagiarism Tutor
Turnitin
PSU Teaching & Learning with Technology

6.3. Disability

If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the campus disability liaison as soon as possible: (name, office, telephone, email). For additional information, check the university web site for Disability Services.

6.4. Resources to Help with Research, Writing, Documentation, and Citation

Information Literacy Tutorial
University Learning Center
Writing Center

6.5. Use of Angel and email communication

Please check the webpage on the ANGEL website regularly. An online version of the syllabus is available there, and you will be notified of any cancellation of a course meeting there. If you need to contact me, send a well-constructed email to dwa132@psu.edu with an appropriate subject line (e.g. P120 Question) and with an appropriate address (e.g. “Dear David”). Failure to do either, or emailing me with multiple links attached (“check this youtube link”)
will result in your instructor deleting your email. Students are responsible for activity on their computer accounts so only send emails pertinent to the course. Also, please do not send correspondence from cellular telephones (e.g. Blackberries, etc.).

6.6. Drop procedures and Incompletes
Students who simply stop attending class, for whatever reason, without officially withdrawing from the course, will receive the grade of F. If you expect a refund, be aware that the date the withdrawal form is processed by Penn State registrar’s office determines the amount of refund. Consult the Register site for drop procedures. Consult the Handbook for taking an Incomplete (D/F).

6.7. Student Guidance
If you are in need of psychological counseling, please do not hesitate to contact Penn State’s Counseling & Psychological Services (phone: 814-863-0395). For any problem related to your studies, university policies and procedures, do not hesitate to seek the help of the Student Affairs Services, your Academic Advisor, or arrange a meeting with your instructor who will help you obtain assistance through one of the above, or another, agency.

6.8. Classroom Environment
A number of factors figure into creating a healthy classroom environment. In order to facilitate such an environment, I ask you to obey the following: (1) the use of cell phones in any capacity is prohibited (please turn ringers/buzzers off, no text-messaging during class), (2) please do not begin to ‘pack up’ your belongings before your instructor has explicitly dismissed you, (3) please come to class rested, sleeping in class is strictly prohibited, (4) please do not do other work in class. If you are incapable of performing (1)–(4) or are disruptive in class, you will kindly be asked to leave the classroom.

6.9. Challenge Examination
For some courses, students may request a challenge examination as a substitute for completing the usual requirements of a course. If the examination is successfully completed the credits received are described as "credits by examination" (policy 42-50).

Elements of this syllabus are subject to modification due to unforeseen variables, catastrophic events, or other factors. The instructor will announce any of these changes in class.