Title of the course: Philosophy of Language

Detailed syllabus of the course, with topics addressed in each 90-minute lecture (less than 2 pages):

Course description:

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 one of Frege’s “puzzles” consists in, providing the starting point for contemporary philosophy of language. During the course, our aim is to gain a greater understanding of the nature of meaning, and its relation to reference, truth, communication.

Requirements:

Monday through Thursday, attend and participate in each seminar, taking notes whenever appropriate. Class participation for the course is worth 20 % of your grade.

For Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday,

- read all the assigned readings: 15–30 pages each day, and come prepared to discuss them in the seminar;
- based on the readings, write up and bring along each day 3 questions/comments; these make up 15 % of your grade;
- we’ll be referring to the readings throughout the seminar, so be sure to bring with you electronic or hard copies of the readings assigned.

For Friday’s final exam, review (i) your notes, (ii) the daily readings (approx. 85 pages), (iii) additional excerpts read and discussed in class (approx. 20 pages), and (iv) an additional approx. 25 pages from the textbook we’ll be using. The exam is thus based on about 130 pages of reading material. The final exam consists of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The exam makes up the remaining 65 % of your grade.
Required readings:

Alongside seminal texts in the philosophy of language (by Frege, Grice, Kripke and Strawson), one more reading will function as a “textbook”:


Electronic copies of all readings will be made available to students enrolled in the class. The seminal texts (by Frege, Grice, Kripke and Strawson) can also be found in the following anthology:


Optional readings:

- Other parts of Lycan’s book are worth checking out.
- See also the readings cited and suggested in Lycan’s book.
- See also additional papers and paper recommendations in the anthology edited by Martinich and Sosa.

Schedule

(Page numbers for the excerpts will be specified in the detailed syllabus made available at the beginning of the course.)

October 7–11, 2013 (Monday through Friday)

Monday

Session I. Introduction, Frege on meaning and truth. In-class reading: excerpts from Frege: On Sense and Reference (1892).

Session II. A very brief introduction to logic

No advance readings. For the exam, read Lycan Chapter 1.

Tuesday

Session I. Russell on definite descriptions

Session II. Strawson on definite descriptions


Wednesday

Session I. Kripke on the reference of proper names

Session II. Kripke on the meaning of proper names


For the exam, read: excerpts from Lycan Chapters 3, 4

Thursday

Session I. Grice on meaning

Session II. Grice on communication


Friday

Final exam

Background information on the web (optional):

Short CV (less than half page):

Education:
Majors: Philosophy, Logico-Linguistic Studies.

Current position:
Assistant Professor, Department of Logic, Philosophy Institute, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös University (ELTE) (2006–)

Teaching:
Over 20 different courses taught at the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. levels, primarily in philosophy of language, logic, metaphysics and the philosophy of mind. Typically one course per term taught entirely in English (1998–)

Presentations:
Over the past decade and a half, about 20 invited and conference presentations in Hungarian, about 25 in English.

Citations:

Grants, scholarships:
Bolyai János Research Fellowship, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2009–2012)

Important publications (5-10):

Anything else (course requirements, readings list, etc):