

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-16

Philosophy 2260G: Introduction to Philosophy of Language

Winter Term 2016

Class Days and Hours: M 1:30-2:20;
W 1:30-3:20

Classroom: TC 303

Instructor: Robert J. Stainton

Office: StH 3126

Office Hours: W 3:45-5:00

Phone: 519-661-2111 ext. 82757

Email: rstainto@uwo.ca

Web Site: <http://publish.uwo.ca/~rstainto/>

Blog: <https://robstainton.wordpress.com/>

DESCRIPTION

An introductory survey of philosophy of language. The course will focus on the contemporary Analytic tradition (including authors such as Frege, Russell, Wittgenstein, Austin, Quine, Katz, Searle, Davidson and Chomsky), but it will also draw some connections to debates in Ancient and Early Modern philosophy.

This year, the two major themes will be the **metaphysics** and **epistemology** of natural languages, specifically: **1)** Are there really such things as natural languages (e.g., English, Spanish and Urdu)? If so, what sort of thing are they: Are languages abstract, physical, mental, or social? **2)** How should one investigate natural languages? E.g., should theorists emphasize the methods of mathematics and logic, physics, psychology, or sociology?

REQUIRED TEXTS

None. Any readings will be announced in class and made available electronically.

OBJECTIVES

The twin objectives of this class are development of philosophical skills and familiarity with some central issues in philosophy of language. The skills include close scrutiny of arguments, oral debate, and careful, clear writing. The issues, as noted above, are both metaphysical and methodological. Students will also be introduced to important empirical results about natural languages, where these bear on the philosophical questions.

REQUIREMENTS

In-Class Debate: 5%

Group Presentation: 5%

Ten "One Pagers": 25%

First In-Class Quiz (January 27th): 10%

Second In-Class Quiz (TBA): 10%

Glossary (March 23rd): 15%

Final Exam: 30%

Attendance and participation are mandatory in all cases. Students who regularly miss classes, and have not provided medical documentation justifying this, will be requested to withdraw. Students who miss a debate/exam/presentation/quiz without proper documentation from the Dean's Office will receive a zero on that assignment.

Structure of the class and explanation of assignments

- Wednesdays will be devoted mostly to lectures by the instructor, Prof. Stainton. On most Wednesdays, he will assign one discussion question; frequently, he will also assign glossary items for the students to look up and define. Students will write a **one-page response to the question**, to be submitted on the following Monday. There will be a total of ten of these "one pagers".
- Monday classes will be devoted mostly to debating the assigned weekly question, in varying formats: some will be structured around **group presentations**, based upon students' written answers; others will be structured around **between-group debates**. Both formats will be graded on a five-point scale.
- The **quizzes** will be held on two Wednesdays. They will be focussed on: the lectures; the discussion questions; and the glossary terms.
- Near the end of the term, students will submit their **glossaries** for correction. They will be returned in time to aid in studying for the final exam, which will be scheduled during the official exam period.
- The **final exam**, because it is intended to help the students synthesize everything they have learned into a coherent picture, will cover all the material studied in class. It will consist of short answers and essays.

With the exception of students granted special accommodation, no electronic devices will be permitted during quizzes or exams. Use of handheld devices and browsing of websites during class is very strongly discouraged, as it distracts both the user and his/her neighbours.

Submission instructions

- All written work must be submitted, in anonymous form and in hard-copy, either in class or by means of the Philosophy drop box (on the first floor of Stevenson Hall, beside the elevator).
- It must also be submitted electronically to **Turnitin**: "All required papers are subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>)."
- Late submissions will not be accepted without explicit prior permission of the instructor and/or proper medical documentation.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first

week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal. In particular, scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a **Scholastic Offence**, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf.

Students who are in **emotional/mental distress** should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

For additional information, see:

- Registrarial Services (<http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>)
- Student Support Services (<http://westernusc.ca/services/>)