

WESTERN UNIVERSITY
Department of Philosophy
Undergraduate Course Outline 2024-25

PHILOSOP 4991F/ 9400L
Survey of Philosophy of Language

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Information including instructor contact details and course location can be found on the course Owl BrightSpace: <https://westernu.brightspace.com/>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

An introductory survey of theories of linguistic meaning, drawing principally on classic articles in Analytic philosophy of language which have served as a foundation. Topics will include: reference, truth conditions and possible worlds; assertions and other speech acts; speakers' reference; conversational implicature; metaphor; indexicals and demonstratives; pragmatic determinants of what is said.

Authors may include: J.L. Austin, Emma Borg, Robyn Carston, Donald Davidson, Keith Donnellan, H. Paul Grice, David Kaplan, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, John Searle, Dan Sperber & Deirdre Wilson, and Catherine Wearing.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The main objectives are to fine-tune students' skills as linguists and philosophers, and to introduce key concepts, positions and arguments in semantics/pragmatics. The focus, as noted, will be on philosophical foundations.

To make these objectives achievable, students should have a background in at least one of philosophy or linguistics. It is not required that students have both, but it would be extremely difficult for a student with background in neither to master the skills and information in play.

COURSE SCHEDULE

I. Introduction

Aims and Logistics

Background: Frege and Russell

II. Varieties of Reference

Peter Strawson, "On Referring"

*Keith Donnellan, "Reference and Definite Descriptions"

Saul Kripke, "Speaker's Reference and Semantic Reference"

David Kaplan, "Demonstratives"

III. Assertion and Other Speech Acts

*J.L. Austin, "Performative Utterances"

David Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"

IV. Pragmatics and What Is Said

H.P. Grice, "Logic and Conversation"

Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson, "Précis of *Relevance*"

*John Perry, "Thought without Representation"

John Searle, "Literal Meaning"

*Emma Borg, "Minimalism versus Contextualism in Semantics"

V. Metaphor

Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean"

*Catherine Wearing, "Metaphor and What Is Said"

VI. Final Review

TEXTS

M. Ezcurdia and R.J. Stainton (eds.)(2013) *The Semantics-Pragmatics Boundary in Philosophy*.
Peterborough, ON: Broadview.

METHOD OF EVALUATION

In-Class Participation: 10%

Two In-Class Team Debates: 15%

Four "Briefing Notes": 20%

Glossary Entries: 25%

Final Exam: 30%

- *Participation*: Because a main aim is inculcation of skills in philosophical and linguistic discussion, attendance and participation are mandatory. Students who regularly miss classes without justification will be requested to withdraw.
- *Debates*: Students will be divided into teams of about four or five, and each team will be assigned either the "pro" or "con" side of a resolution. There will be a group score which will then be modified based on peer reports of the individual student's contribution to the group.
- *Briefing Notes*: At the outset of the relevant classes, students will hand in two to three pages of typewritten notes on the chapter assigned. 750-1000 words is appropriate. These "briefing notes" will explain the main aims of the text and the main means by which those aims are met. In the usual case, the article's main aim will be to establish a conclusion, and the main means will be via an argument, but there can be exceptions. Outlining these means/aims is to be sharply contrasted with describing, sub-section by sub-section, what the author covers in the text. Use of secondary sources is encouraged but not required.
- *Glossary Entries*: As the course progresses, students will be assigned as homework "glossary entries" on key linguistic and philosophical terms. An entry must be both complete and accurate. Complete means a definition, some kind of extended explication, and an example where possible. Each entry should be a few paragraphs long. A compendium of glossaries

will be uploaded for grading at the end of the class, but entries should be completed before the next class.

- *Final Exam*: The exam will cover overarching themes from the entire class and will be essay-based. Its aim is to help student synthesize the material in the various readings and lectures into a coherent whole.

Submission instructions

- All written work must be submitted via the Assignment tab on OWL for plagiarism checking and also submitted in hard copy, either in class or via the Philosophy Drop Box outside the Philosophy office.
- Late submissions will not be accepted without explicit prior permission of the instructor. There is no “late penalty”. In particular, because the glossary entries are homework, the compendium should not be uploaded late except under extraordinary circumstances.

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES

The Department of Philosophy policies that govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses are available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website <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.

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

STATEMENT ON THE USE OF GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

Use of ChatGP and other AI tools is not permitted. If plagiarism or unauthorized AI use is suspected, the instructor will ask for research notes and/or drafts of assignments after the assignment has been submitted. Students must keep all notes and first drafts until the assignment is returned to them.

ACCOMMODATION

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student’s Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at https://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/academic_consideration.pdf

The Student Medical Certificate is available at

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/medicalform.pdf

ACADEMIC CONSIDERATION

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student’s control that have a substantial but temporary impact on the student’s ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of Faculty in which the student is registered.
2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
 - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
 - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
 - c. Supporting documentation as relevant

Requests without supporting documentation are limited to one per term per course.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner. Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term always require formal supporting documentation.

Policy on Academic Consideration – Undergraduate Students in First Entry Programs

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION

Western’s Policy on Accommodation for Religious Holidays can be found here:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_religious.pdf.

In the case of mid-term tests, notification is to be “given in writing to the instructor as early as possible, but not later than **one week** prior to the writing of the test”.

COURSE ASSIGNMENT

The last day of scheduled classes in any course will be the last day on which course assignments will be accepted for credit in a course. Instructors will be required to return assignments to students as promptly as possible with reasonable explanations of the instructor's assessment of the assignment.

SCHOLASTIC OFFENCES

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

PLAGIARISM CHECKING

In addition to submitted hard copies of assignments for grading, all required papers must also be submitted 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>.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

Your Home Faculty's Academic Advising Office will support or refer whenever you have an issue that is affecting your studies, including information on adding/dropping courses, academic considerations for absences, appeals, exam conflicts, and many other academic related matters. Do not hesitate to reach out to them if you are struggling and unsure where to go for help. Contact info for all Faculties is here:

https://registrar.uwo.ca/faculty_academic_counselling.html

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western (<https://uwo.ca/health/>) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends (24/7 availability).

GENDER-BASED AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Western University [is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence](#) (GBSV) and providing compassionate support to anyone who is going through or has gone through these traumatic events. If you are experiencing or have experienced GBSV (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts at the following website:

https://www.uwo.ca/health/student_support/survivor_support/get-help.html. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact support@uwo.ca.