Philosophy 465 – Philosophy of Language
Course Syllabus

Instructor: Nathan Salmon

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Office Hours: Mondays, 3:30 pm; Tuesdays, 12:30 pm; and by appointment. MHP 205B.

Format: Lectures on Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am—12:15 pm, VKC 211.

Description: Examination of the classical theories of meaning and reference: John Stuart Mill, Gottlob Frege, and Bertrand Russell. Saul Kripke and the theory of so-called direct reference. Issues to be discussed center on the following: What is the nature of the semantic, cognitive content of a declarative sentence, and what do the constituents of the sentence contribute to that content? How is the designatum of a term secured—e.g., how does the proper name ‘Angelina Jolie’ come to designate the person it does, instead of designating someone else altogether or no one at all? How is the semantic content of a sentence secured, and how is the contribution of the sentence constituents secured? Solutions to the classical puzzles of meaning and reference are investigated.

Requirements: One term paper, approximately 10 pages, due in class Tuesday, October 28; final exam, Tuesday, December 16, 8:00 am (ugh!)—10:00 am. Paper topics will be suggested orally during lectures.

Texts: The readings for the course are drawn from a variety of sources. The only required text is Robert M. Harnish, ed., Basic Topics in the Philosophy of Language (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1994). The following four books also contain a fair concentration of the readings. Depending on your level of interest you might consider purchasing some or all of them.


Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames, eds, Propositions and Attitudes (Oxford Readings in Philosophy, 1988).

N.B.: NO GRADE OF INCOMPLETE WILL BE GIVEN FOR THIS COURSE WITHOUT A LEGITIMATE MEDICAL EXCUSE, CONFIRMED IN WRITING BY YOUR PHYSICIAN.
TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

The following schedule, though tentative, is to be used as a guide. One’s reading should stay one step ahead of the lectures.

Weeks 1-8, August 25—October 16: Fregean Theory


Salmon, “Introduction to Sense and Reference,” Harnish, pp. 110-114; Frege’s Puzzle (excerpts), in Harnish, pp. 447-450; in Davidson, pp. 280-326; Alonzo Church, Introduction to Mathematical Logic I, “Introduction,” Sections 00-04, pp. 1-39, in Davidson, pp. 54-81.


Hilary Putnam, “Synonymy and the Analysis of Belief Sentences,” in Salmon and Soames, eds Propositions and Attitudes, pp. 149-158; Church, “Intensional Isomorphism and Identity of Belief,” in Salmon and Soames, pp. 159-168.

**Term Papers Due in Class: Tuesday, October 28**
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**Weeks 9-12, October 21—November 13: Russellian Theory**

Salmon, “Introduction to Sense and Reference,” in Harnish, pp. 105-110; Bertrand Russell, Selection from the Frege-Russell Correspondence, in Salmon and Soames, pp. 56-57; “Knowledge by Acquaintance and Knowledge by Description,” in Salmon and Soames, pp. 16-32; “On Denoting,” in Harnish, pp. 161-173 [also in G&K, pp. 87-99; Martinich, pp. 203-211; Copi and Gould, Contemporary Philosophical Logic, pp. 84-96].


Recommended: P. F. Strawson, “On Referring,” in G&K, pp. 108-129 [also in Martinich, pp. 219-234; also in Rosenberg and Travis, pp. 175-195; also in Copi and Gould, Contemporary Readings in Logical Theory, pp. 105-127].


**Week 13-15, November 18—December 4: Direct Reference**

