

**Philosophy 638: Philosophy of Language**  
Fall 2020

*Last updated: 25 August 2020*

Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)  
Time: Virtual cohort A T 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM  
Virtual cohort B Th 11:00 AM – 12:15 PM  
Office hours: T Th 12:15–1:00 PM, or by appointment  
Email: caplan@ku.edu

**Method of instruction**

Instruction will be via course content posted on Blackboard and real-time discussions on Zoom. For real-time discussions, the class will be divided into two virtual cohorts. One virtual cohort will meet on Tuesdays; the other virtual cohort will meet on Thursdays. Students will be assigned to a virtual cohort at the beginning of the semester.

Information on Zoom meeting rooms for real-time discussions and office hours is on Blackboard (under Announcements). This information will also be emailed to you.

**Description**

This course will largely be on names (e.g. ‘Constance’, ‘Gottlob’); natural kind terms (e.g. ‘tiger’, ‘unicorn’); race terms (e.g. ‘Black’, ‘White’); gender terms (e.g. ‘woman’, ‘man’); and pronouns (e.g. ‘she’, ‘he’, ‘they’).

We will read work by E. E. Constance Jones, Gottlob Frege, Saul Kripke, Takashi Yagisawa, Sally Haslanger, Joshua Glasgow, Quayshawn Spencer, Jennifer Saul, Esa Díaz-León, Talia Mae Bettcher, Elizabeth Barnes, and Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak.

**Requirements**

Quizzes	15%
Short writing assignment	15%
First paper	30%
Final paper	40%

The number of quizzes will be determined over the course of the semester. Each quiz will be short. The quizzes will largely cover material that we have already discussed.

The short writing assignment should be less than a page. The first paper should be about 3 or 4 pages. The final paper should be about 5–7 pages.

Due dates will be the same for students in different virtual cohorts. That means that some things might be due on a Tuesday even if you're in the virtual cohort that meets on Thursdays; and, conversely, some things might be due on a Thursday even if you're in the virtual cohort that meets on Tuesdays.

Due dates will be announced in discussions, by email, and on Blackboard. Due dates for quizzes and the short writing assignment will be announced at least five days in advance (e.g. the Thursday before a Tuesday).

Due dates for the first paper will be announced at least one week in advance.

The final paper will be due at **1:00 PM on Wednesday, 9 December 2020**.

### Readings

Readings are available on Blackboard. Sometimes we will carefully read small amounts of text in discussions. This will make more sense if you have the relevant text in front of you.

### Grading

Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades using the following scheme.<sup>1</sup>

From	To	Letter grade
93.50	100.00	A
90.00	93.49	A-
86.50	89.99	B+
83.50	86.49	B
80.00	83.49	B-
76.50	79.99	C+
73.50	76.49	C
70.00	73.49	C-
66.50	69.99	D+
63.50	66.49	D
60.00	63.49	D-
00.00	59.99	F

Grades will be recorded on Blackboard, but I won't be using Blackboard to calculate your final grade; rather, I'll be using my own spreadsheet. If you're curious about your grade at any point, please email me.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ben Eggleston, "Plus/Minus Grading," available at [benegg.net/plus-minus\\_grading.pdf](http://benegg.net/plus-minus_grading.pdf).

## **Prerequisite**

Introduction to Symbolic Logic (Philosophy 310), or an equivalent course, is a prerequisite or a corequisite of a prerequisite. (That is, it is a prerequisite or a corequisite of Analytic Philosophy (Philosophy 388), which is a prerequisite for this course.) I might use some notation from symbolic logic (e.g. ' $\exists xFx$ ' or ' $a=b$ '), and I will explain it when I introduce it if I do, but you might find this course easier if you have already taken Introduction to Symbolic Logic.

## **Academic misconduct**

The university policy on academic misconduct is set out in Article II, Section 6 of the University Senate Rules and Regulations. Examples of academic misconduct include (but are not limited to) “giving or receiving of unauthorized aid on ... assignments,” “knowingly misrepresenting the source of any academic work,” and “plagiarizing another’s work.” Penalties for academic misconduct include receiving a failing grade for the course, being suspended from the university, and being expelled. For further details, see <https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR #art2sect6>.

## **Accessibility**

I’m committed to making this class as accessible as possible. If you have any particular accommodation requests, please let me know as soon as possible.

If you anticipate or encounter any technical problems with taking this class remotely, please let me know as soon as possible.

## **Schedule**

The precise schedule will depend on the pace at which we work through the material in discussion. Information about what we’re doing in any given week will be available on Blackboard. I will also send email updates ahead of each week.

The first day of class is Tuesday, 25 August 2020 (for virtual cohort A) or Thursday, 27 August 2020 (for virtual cohort B). The last day of class is Tuesday, 24 November 2020 (for everyone). The final paper is due during finals week, on Wednesday, 9 December 2020 (at 1:00 PM).

## Tentative outline

The outline is tentative. I might make changes, depending on what we're interested in and how things go. I'll announce changes via email and on Blackboard.

### *Names and natural kind terms*

E. E. Constance Jones, *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1890), Section II and Section VI (esp. pp. 44–54).

Gottlob Frege, "Über Sinn und Bedeutung," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100.1 (1892): 25–50. Trans. by Max Black as "Sense and Reference" in *Philosophical Review* 57.3 (May 1948): 209–230.

Saul A. Kripke, "Naming and Necessity," in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, Synthese Library 40 (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1972), 253–355, 763–769. Reprinted as *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). Excerpts reprinted in Robert M. Harnish, ed., *Basic Topics in the Philosophy of Language* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994), 192–220.

Saul A. Kripke, *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), Lecture I (pp. 26–28) and Lecture II (esp. pp. 43–53).

Takashi Yagisawa, "Proper Names as Variables," *Erkenntnis* 21.2 (July 1984): 195–208.

### *Race terms*

Sally Haslanger, "A Social Constructionist Analysis of Race," in *Revisiting Race in a Genomic Age*, ed. Barbara A. Koenig, Sandra Soo-Jin Lee, and Sarah S. Richardson, Rutgers Series in Medical Anthropology (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008), 56–69.

Joshua Glasgow, *A Theory of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Chapter 6.

Quayshawn Spencer, "A More Radical Solution to the Race Problem," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volumes* 93 (2019): 25–48.

### *Gender terms*

Jennifer Saul, "Politically Significant Terms and Philosophy of Language: Methodological Issues," in *Out from the Shadows: Analytical Feminist Contributions to Traditional Philosophy*, ed. Sharon L. Crasnow and Anita M. Superson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 195–216.

Esa Díaz-León, “*Woman* as a Politically Significant Term: A Solution to the Puzzle,” *Hypatia* 31.2 (Spring 2016): 245–258.

Talia Mae Bettcher, “Through the Looking Glass: Trans Theory Meets Feminist Philosophy,” in *The Routledge Companion to Feminist Philosophy*, ed. Ann Garry, Serene J. Khader, and Alison Stone (New York: Routledge, 2017), 393–404.

Elizabeth Barnes, “Gender and Gender Terms,” *Noûs* 54.3 (Sept. 2020): 704–730.

### *Pronouns*

Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, “He/She/They/Ze,” *Ergo* 5.14 (2018): 371–406.