

Philosophy 638: Philosophy of Language
Spring 2019

Updated 24 January 2019

Instructor: Ben Caplan
Time: T Th 9:30 AM – 10:45 AM
Location: 4011 Wescoe
Office: 3079 Wescoe
Office hours: T Th 10:45 AM – 11:45 AM
T 2:15 PM – 3:15 PM
Or by appointment
Email: caplan@ku.edu

Description

In the first part of the course, we will study names (e.g. ‘Constance’, ‘Odysseus’); natural kind terms (e.g. ‘gold’, ‘unicorn’); and demonstratives and indexicals (e.g. ‘this’, ‘I’, ‘now’).

In the second part of the course, we will study race terms (e.g. ‘Black’, ‘White’, ‘Asian’, ‘Latinx’); slurs (e.g. ‘frog’ in Quebec English, ‘*bloke*’ in Québécois French); sex terms (e.g. ‘female’, ‘male’); gender terms (e.g. ‘woman’, ‘man’); pronouns (e.g. ‘she’, ‘they’); and generics (e.g. ‘Canadians are polite’).

Requirements

Quiz	5%
Short writing assignment	10%
Problem set	20%
First paper	30%
Final paper	35%

The quiz will be on the use–mention distinction and related terminology. It is worth 5% of the final grade; but, to pass the course, you will need to get a perfect score on it. You may take the quiz as many times as you like during the semester, provided that you get a perfect score at least once by the end of the semester.

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 announced in class and via Blackboard. Due dates for the quiz 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 problem set and the first paper will be announced at least one week in advance.

The final paper will be due at 10 AM on Wednesday, 15 May 2019.

Readings

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

Grading

Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades using the following scheme.¹

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

I won't be using Blackboard to calculate your grades; rather, I'll be using my own spreadsheet. If you're curious about your grade at any point, just ask or email me.

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

¹ See Ben Eggleston, “Plus/Minus Grading,” available at benegg.net/plus-minus_grading.pdf.

for the course, being suspended from the university, and being expelled. For further details, see 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 speak to me as soon as possible.

Electronic devices

You are permitted to use laptops and other electronic devices in class, since some students prefer taking notes, or reading texts, on such devices.

However, students report that they find laptop use in class distracting. This includes laptop use by their peers.² (If you're browsing social media during class, you might find it interesting. So, apparently, might those around you.) More importantly, "the level of laptop use was negatively related to several measures of student learning, including ... overall course performance," which is to say that (generally speaking) the more students used laptops in class, the worse their final grades were.³

If you use a laptop or other electronic device in class, please try to sit somewhere where your screen is less likely to be visible to others.

Concealed carry

If you carry a concealed handgun, familiarize yourself both with the relevant state and federal laws and with KU's weapons policy. See concealedcarry.ku.edu/information.

Schedule

A detailed and updated schedule will be posted on Blackboard.

There is no class on Thursday, 22 February 2019 (annual meeting of the Central Division of the American Philosophical Association). There might or might not be class on Tuesday, 20 February 2019; I will let you know ahead of time.

There is no class on Tuesday, 12 March 2019 or on Thursday, 14 March 2019 (Spring Break).

² Carrie B. Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," *Computers and Education* 50.3 (April 2008): 906–914.

³ Fried, "In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning," p. 906.

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 in class and via Blackboard.

Part I: Names, natural kind terms, demonstratives, indexicals

Names

Jones (1890)	<i>Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions</i> , Section II, Section IV, Section VI (esp. pp. 44–54)
Jones (1893)	“On the Nature of Logical Judgment,” esp. pp. 441–442
Frege (1879)	<i>Begriffsschrift</i> , Section 8
Frege (1892)	“On Sense and Reference”
Kripke (1972)	<i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture I (excerpts), Lecture II (excerpts)
Kripke (2013)	<i>Reference and Existence</i> , Lecture I (esp. pp. 26–28)

Natural kind terms

Kripke (1972)	<i>Naming and Necessity</i> , Lecture III (excerpt, pp. 116–129)
Kripke (2013)	<i>Reference and Existence</i> , Lecture II (esp. pp. 43–53)

Demonstratives and indexicals

Kaplan (1989)	“Demonstratives,” Preface, Sections I–VI, IX.(i), XI, XIV–XV
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Part II: Race terms, slurs, sex terms, gender terms, pronouns, generics

Race terms

Haslanger (2005)	“What Are We Talking About? The Semantics and Politics of Social Kinds”
Glasgow (2009)	<i>A Theory of Race</i> , Chapter 6
Díaz-León (2012)	“Social Kinds, Conceptual Analysis, and the Operative Concept: A Reply to Haslanger”

Slurs

- Hom and May (2018) “Pejoratives as Fiction”
 Marques (2017) “Pejorative Discourse Is Not Fiction”

Sex terms

- Lewis (1993) “Many, But Almost One,” esp. pp. 171–175
 Daly (2015) “Sex, Vagueness, and the Olympics”

Gender terms

- Saul (2012) “Politically Significant Terms and Philosophy of Language: Methodological Issues”
 Bettcher (2013) “Trans Women and the Meaning of ‘Woman’”
 Díaz-León (2016) “*Woman* as a Politically Significant Term: A Solution to the Puzzle”

Pronouns

- Dembroff and
 Wodak (2018) “He/She/They/Ze”

Generics

- Haslanger (2011) “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground”
 Leslie (2017) “The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization”
 Saul (forthcoming) “Are Generics Especially Pernicious?”