

**Philosophy 638: Philosophy of Language**  
Spring 2020

*21 January 2020 (updated)*

Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)  
Time: T Th 9:30–10:45 AM  
Location: 4011 Wescoe  
Office: 3079 Wescoe  
Office hours: T Th 10:45–11:30 AM, 2:15–3:00 PM  
Or by appointment  
Email: caplan@ku.edu

### **Description**

This course will 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’); pronouns (e.g. ‘she’, ‘he’, ‘they’); and, time permitting, generics (e.g. ‘Canadians are polite’).

We will read work by E. E. Constance Jones; Gottlob Frege; Saul Kripke; Takashi Yagisawa; Kenneth Taylor; Sally Haslanger; Joshua Glasgow; Quayshawn Spencer; Jennifer Saul; Esa Díaz-León; Talia Mae Bettcher; Elizabeth Barnes; Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak; Abigail Saguy and Juliet Williams; Alex Hanna, Nikki Stevens, Os Keyes, and Maliha Ahmed; and Sarah-Jane Leslie.

### **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 10:00 AM on Friday, 15 May 2020.

### 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.<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

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 examinations ...

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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).

or other 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 speak to me as soon as possible.

### **Electronic devices**

You are permitted to use laptops and other electronic devices in class for legitimate academic purposes: for example, taking notes or reading texts.

However, students report that they find laptop use in class distracting. This includes laptop use by their peers.<sup>2</sup> (If you’re browsing social media during class, you might find it interesting. So, apparently, might those around you.) More importantly, “A comparison of exam scores of students ... suggests that permitting computers negatively impacts scores.”<sup>3</sup>

### **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 <https://concealedcarry.ku.edu/information>.

### **Schedule**

A detailed and updated schedule will be posted on Blackboard as we go (under Schedule). The precise schedule will depend on the pace at which we work through the material in class.

There is no class on Tuesday, 10 March 2020 (Spring Break) or Thursday, 12 March 2020 (Spring Break).

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<sup>2</sup> See Carrie B. Fried, “In-Class Laptop Use and Its Effects on Student Learning,” *Computers and Education* 50.3 (April 2008): 906–914.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Payne Carter, Kyle Greenberg, and Michael S. Walker, “The Impact of Computer Usage on Academic Performance: Evidence from a Randomized Trial at the United States Military Academy,” *Economics of Education Review* 56 (Feb. 2017): 118–132, at p. 124. See also Fried, “In-Class Laptop Use,” 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.

### *Names and natural kind terms*

- E. E. Constance Jones (1890), *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions* (Edinburgh: Clark), Section II, Section VI (esp. pp. 44–54).
- Gottlob Frege (1892), “Über Sinn und Bedeutung,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100: 25–50; trans. by Max Black as “Sense and Reference” in *Philosophical Review* 57.3 (May 1948): 209–230.
- Saul A. Kripke (1972), “Naming and Necessity,” in *Semantics of Natural Language*, ed. Donald Davidson and Gilbert Harman, Synthese Library 40 (Dordrecht: Reidel), 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 (2013), *Reference and Existence: The John Locke Lectures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), Lecture I (esp. pp. 26–28), Lecture II (esp. pp. 43–53).
- Takashi Yagisawa (1984), “Proper Names as Variables,” *Erkenntnis* 21.2 (July): 195–208.
- Kenneth A. Taylor (2015), “Names as Devices of Explicit Co-reference,” *Erkenntnis* 80.2 (May): 235–262.

### *Race terms*

- Sally Haslanger (2008), “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), 56–69.
- Joshua Glasgow (2009), *A Theory of Race* (New York: Routledge), Chapter 6.
- Quayshawn Spencer (2019), “A More Radical Solution to the Race Problem,” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volumes* 93: 25–48.

### *Gender terms*

- Jennifer Saul (2012), “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), 195–216.
- Esa Díaz-León (2016), “Woman as a Politically Significant Term: A Solution to the Puzzle,” *Hypatia* 31.2 (Spring): 245–258.
- Talia Mae Bettcher (2017), “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), 393–404.
- Elizabeth Barnes (forthcoming), “Gender and Gender Terms,” *Noûs*.

### *Pronouns*

- Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak (2018), “He/She/They/Ze,” *Ergo* 5.14: 371–406.
- Abigail C. Saguy and Juliet A. Williams (2019), “Why We Should All Use They/Them Pronouns,” *Scientific American* blog (11 April). <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/why-we-should-all-use-they-them-pronouns/>
- Alex Hanna, Nikki L Stevens, Os Keyes, and Maliha Ahmed (2019), “Actually, We Should *Not* All Use They/Them Pronouns,” *Scientific American* blog (3 May). <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/actually-we-should-not-all-use-they-them-pronouns/>
- Abigail C. Saguy, Juliet A. Williams, Robin Dembroff, and Daniel Wodak (2019), “We Should All Use They/Them Pronouns ... Eventually,” *Scientific American* blog (30 May). <https://blogs.scientificamerican.com/voices/we-should-all-use-they-them-pronouns-eventually/>

### *Generics*

- Sally Haslanger (2011), “Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground,” in *Feminist Metaphysics: Explorations in the Ontology of Sex, Gender and the Self*, Feminist Philosophy, ed. Charlotte Witt (Dordrecht: Springer), 179–207.
- Sarah-Jane Leslie (2017), “The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice, and Generalization,” *Journal of Philosophy* 114.8 (Aug.): 393–421.
- Jennifer Saul (forthcoming), “Are Generics Especially Pernicious?” *Inquiry*.