Philosophy 638: Philosophy of Language
Spring 2022

Last updated: 20 January 2022

Instructor:	Ben Caplan (he/him/his)
Time:	T Th 9:30–10:45 AM
Location:	4012 Wescoe
Office hours:	T Th 10:45–11:45 AM, or by appointment
Office:	3079 Wescoe
Email:	caplan@ku.edu

Method of instruction and office hours

The plan is to hold class in person and to hold office hours in person or via Zoom. Information on Zoom for office hours is on Blackboard (under Announcements). Any changes in the method of instruction or office hours will be announced by email or on Blackboard.

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, 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%
Second paper	40%

There will be roughly one quiz each week. Each quiz will be short. The quizzes will largely cover material that we have already discussed. Late quizzes will not be accepted, but only the 10 quizzes on which you score the highest will be counted.

The short writing assignment should be less than a page. The first paper should be about 3 pages. The second paper should be about 5 or 6 pages.

Due dates will be announced in class 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 second paper will be due at **10:00 AM on Thursday, 12 May 2022**.

You will be required to consult with me before submitting each of your papers. The goal is to ensure that the decisions that you make in each case (about topic, approach, etc.) will allow you to write a well-structured paper that best reflects your ideas and interests.

Readings

Readings are available on Blackboard. Sometimes we will carefully read small amounts of text in class. 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.[1]

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.

Prerequisite

Introduction to Symbolic Logic (Philosophy 310), or an equivalent course, is a pre- or 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. '$\exists x Fx$' 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.

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[1] See Ben Eggleston, "Plus/Minus Grading," available at benegg.net/plus-minus_grading.pdf.

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.

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.[2] (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."[3]

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

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 class will be available on Blackboard.

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

[3] 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.

The first day of class is ~~Tuesday, 18 January 2022~~ Thursday, 20 January 2022. There is no class on Tuesday, 15 March 2022 or Thursday, 17 March 2022 (Spring Break). The last day of class is Thursday, 5 May 2022. The final paper is due during finals week, on Thursday, 12 May 2022 (at 10:00 AM).

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 on Blackboard.

Names and natural kind terms

> E. E. Constance Jones, *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1890), §2 and §6 (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).

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, "How Much Gender is Too Much Gender?," in *The Routledge Handbook of Social and Political Philosophy of Language*, ed. Justin Khoo and Rachel Katharine Sterken (New York: Routledge, forthcoming).