

Philosophy 800: First-Year Seminar
Fall 2020

Last updated: 21 September 2020

Time: Th 3:00–4:50 PM
Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)
Office hours: T Th 12:15–1:00 PM, or by appointment
Email: caplan@ku.edu

Zoom meeting rooms

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

Description

This seminar will cover selected topics in philosophy of language and metaphysics, including reference, modality, essence, and grounding.

We will read work by E. E. Constance Jones, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, Kit Fine, Ricki Bliss, and Kevin Richardson.

Requirements

Weekly writing assignments	20%
Short paper	30%
Final paper	50%

The weekly writing assignments should be one or two paragraphs long, certainly less than a page. The weekly writing assignments are to be completed in pairs. Pairs will be assigned and will rotate.

The short paper should be 2 or 3 pages long. The final paper should be 10–12 pages long.

Weekly writing assignment will be due by the beginning of seminar (i.e. on Thursdays at 3:00 PM). The due date for the short paper will be announced at least one week in advance. The final paper will be due at the end of finals week, on **Friday, 11 December 2020**.

Topics for the short paper will be assigned, but you must discuss your paper with me before submitting it. Topics for the final paper will not be assigned; you will need to come up with your own topic. You are encouraged to consult with me in coming up with your own topic; in any case, you must get your topic approved and discuss your paper with me before submitting it.

Readings

Readings are available on Blackboard. Sometimes we will carefully read small amounts of text in seminar meetings. 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.

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](https://policy.ku.edu/governance/USRR#art2sect6).

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

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. Information about what we're doing in any given week will be available on Blackboard.

The first day of class is Thursday, 27 August 2020. The last day of class is Thursday, 19 November 2020. The final paper is due at the end of finals week, on Friday, 11 December 2020.

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 seminar and on Blackboard.

Reference

E. E. Constance Jones, *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1890), Section II, 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.

Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting," *Mind* 14.56 (Oct. 1905): 479–493.

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), Lecture I (pp. 22–39, pp. 47–49, and pp. 53–70) and Lecture II (pp. 71–97).

Modality, essence, and grounding

Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), Preface (pp. 15–20) and Lecture I (pp. 39–47, pp. 49–53).

David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1986), Chapter 1 (§§1.1, 1.2) and Chapter 3 (§3.1).

Kit Fine, "Essence and Modality," *Philosophical Perspectives* 1 (1994): 1–16.

Ricki Bliss, "Some Work for a Theory of Grounding?," in *Grounding in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Magali Roques (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Kevin Richardson, "On What (In General) Grounds What," *Metaphysics* 2.1 (2020): 73–87.