

Philosophy 800: First-Year Seminar
Fall 2022

Last updated: 22 August 2022

Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)
Time: T 9:00 AM–11:00 AM
Location: 3097 Wescoe
Office: 3079 Wescoe
Office hours: T 11:00 AM–12:00 PM (in person)
F 1:00 PM–2:00 PM (by Zoom)
Or by appointment
Email: caplan@ku.edu

Description

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

We will read work by Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Saul Kripke, David Lewis, Kit Fine, Charlotte Witt, Gideon Rosen, and Sara Bernstein.

Requirements

Weekly writing assignments	25%
Short paper	25%
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 groups. Groups 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 Tuesdays at 9:00 AM). 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, 16 December 2022**.

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 will be available on Canvas. 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 Canvas, but I won't be using Canvas 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>.

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

Accessibility

I'm committed to making this class as accessible as possible. If you have any accommodation requests, 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 Canvas.

The first day of class is Tuesday, 23 August 2022. There is no class on Tuesday, 11 October 2022 (Fall Break). The last day of class is Tuesday, 6 December 2022. The final paper is due at the end of finals week, on Friday, 16 December 2022.

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 Canvas.

Reference

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

Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, 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).

Essence

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

Charlotte Witt, *The Metaphysics of Gender* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), Chapters 1 and 4.

Grounding

Gideon Rosen, "Metaphysical Dependence: Grounding and Reduction," in *Modality: Metaphysics, Logic, and Epistemology*, ed. Bob Hale and Aviv Hoffman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 109–136.

Sara Bernstein, "The Metaphysics of Intersectionality," *Philosophical Studies* 177.2 (Feb. 2020): 321–335.