

Philosophy 863—Seminar: Metaphysics
Fall 2010

Instructor: Ben Caplan
 Time: W 12:30 – 3:18 PM
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Description and readings

The seminar is on propositions. We'll look at some theories about what propositions are. If there's time, we might also look at some recent work on propositions, plurals, and mereology. You might want to acquire the following two books. Both are relatively inexpensive.

Jeffrey C. King, *The Nature and Structure of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

Scott Soames, *What is Meaning?*, Soochow University Lectures in Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

The following paper provides a good overview of what we'll be covering in the seminar.

Scott Soames, "Propositions," *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Delia Graff Fara and Gillian Russell (London: Routledge, forthcoming), available at

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~soames/forthcoming_papers/Propositions.pdf>.

A tentative outline is provided below.

I'd rather not spend much time on whether there are propositions or whether they're structured; I'd like to pretty much assume that there are propositions and that they're structured. If you're interested in Soames's case against propositions as sets of possible worlds and in favor of structured propositions, you should look at the following papers.

Scott Soames, "Direct Reference, Propositional Attitudes, and Semantic Content," *Philosophical Topics* 15 (1987): 47-87; reprinted in *Philosophical Essays Volume 2: The Philosophical Significance of Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 33-71.

Scott Soames, "Why Propositions Can't Be Sets of Truth-Supporting Circumstances," *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 37.3 (June 2008): 267-276; reprinted in *Philosophical Essays Volume 2: The Philosophical Significance of Language* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 72-80.

Requirements

The course grade will be based on one seminar paper (10-15 pages), which will be due at the end of the quarter. Participation can help (but not hurt) your grade.

Disabilities

Students who might need accommodations are encouraged to contact me and the Office for Disability Services (150 Pomerene Hall, 292-3307).

Academic misconduct

Academic misconduct is a serious offense. You are expected to know what counts as academic misconduct. You are also expected not to commit it. Among other things, your work must be your own, and you must cite all of your sources. If I suspect that you have committed academic misconduct, I am required to report my suspicions to the Committee on Academic Misconduct (COAM), which may impose punishments that range from failure to suspension and expulsion.

Academic misconduct is defined in Section 3335-23-04 of the *Code of Student Conduct*, which you are expected to be familiar with. Ignorance of the *Code of Student Conduct* is no excuse for academic misconduct.

The *Code of Student Conduct* is available here:

<http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/pdfs/csc_12-31-07.pdf>.

Information on the Committee on Academic Misconduct is available here:

<<http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html>>.

Tentative outline

1. Theoretical background: what propositions do, and what they're not

Richard Cartwright, "Propositions," in *Analytical Philosophy: First Series*, ed. R.J. Butler (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 81-103; reprinted (with addenda) in *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1987), 33-53.

Richard Cartwright, "Propositions Again," *Nous* 2.3. (August 1968): 229-246; reprinted in *Philosophical Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1987), 55-70.

David Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 53-59.

Scott Soames, *What is Meaning?*, Soochow University Lectures in Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 1 ("Meanings").

Scott Soames, *Philosophy of Language*, Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 5 ("The Metaphysics of Meaning: Propositions and Possible Worlds"), esp. 111-112.

2. Historical background: Frege and Russell

Gottlob Frege, "Über Begriff und Gegenstand," *Vierteljahrsschrift für wissenschaftliche Philosophie* 16 (1892): 192-205; trans. by Peter Geach as "On Concept and Object" in *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*, ed. Peter Geach and Max Black, 1952, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 42-55; reprinted in *Collected Papers on Mathematics, Logic, and Philosophy*, ed. Brian McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 182-194.

Bertrand Russell, *The Principles of Mathematics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1903), Chapter 4 ("Proper Names, Adjectives, and Verbs").

Jeffrey C. King, *The Nature and Structure of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 1 ("The Primary Question and the Answers of Frege and Russell").

Scott Soames, *What is Meaning?*, Soochow University Lectures in Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 2 ("Frege and Russell: The Real Problem of 'the Unity of the Proposition'").

Scott Soames, *Philosophy of Language*, Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 5 ("The Metaphysics of Meaning: Propositions and Possible Worlds"), esp. 113-116.

Scott Soames, "Propositions," *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Delia Graff Fara and Gillian Russell (London: Routledge, forthcoming), esp. pp. 3-7, available at

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~soames/forthcoming_papers/Propositions.pdf>.

Richard G. Heck, jr., and Robert May, "The Composition of Thoughts," *Noûs* (forthcoming).

3. Problems with propositions: the Benacerraf problem, the problem about representation

Michael Jubien, "Propositions and the Objects of Thought," *Philosophical Studies* 104.1 (May 2001): 47-62, esp. 47-54.

Jeffrey C. King, *The Nature and Structure of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapter 1 ("The Primary Question and the Answers of Frege and Russell").

Scott Soames, *What is Meaning?*, Soochow University Lectures in Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapter 2 ("Frege and Russell: The Real Problem of 'the Unity of the Proposition'").

Michael McGlone, "Propositional Structure and Truth-Conditions," *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming), available at

<http://www.acsu.buffalo.edu/~mmcglone/Propositional_Structure_and_Truth_Conditions.pdf>.

4. Positive accounts

Jeffrey C. King, *The Nature and Structure of Content* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), Chapters 2-3 and 5 ("A New Account of Structured Propositions," "Objections to the New Account," and "Objections to Propositions Generally"), esp. Chapters 2-3 and 127-136 of Chapter 5.

Jeffrey C. King, "Questions of Unity," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 109.3 (Oct. 2009): 257-277.

Scott Soames, *What is Meaning?*, Soochow University Lectures in Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapters 5 and 6 ("Toward a Theory of Propositions: A Deflationary Account" and "The Cognitive-Reality Theory of Propositions").

Scott Soames, *Philosophy of Language*, Princeton Foundations of Contemporary Philosophy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010),

Chapter 5 (“The Metaphysics of Meaning: Propositions and Possible Worlds”), esp. 116-123.

Scott Soames, “Propositions,” *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Delia Graff Fara and Gillian Russell (London: Routledge, forthcoming), esp. pp. 12-17, available at

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~soames/forthcoming_papers/Propositions.pdf>.

Scott Soames, “Truth, Propositions, and Possible World-States,” ms. available at

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~soames/drafts/Truth_Propositions_World-States_4.doc>.

5. Criticism of King’s account

David Liebesman, review of King 2007, *Philosophical Review* 119.2 (April 2010): 246-250.

Scott Soames, “Propositions,” *The Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Delia Graff Fara and Gillian Russell (London: Routledge, forthcoming), esp. pp. 7-12, available at

<http://www-bcf.usc.edu/~soames/forthcoming_papers/Propositions.pdf>.

Jeff Speaks, “Facts, Properties, and the Nature of the Proposition,” available at

<<http://www.nd.edu/~jspeaks/papers/facts-properties-propositions.pdf>>.

6. Propositions, mereology, and plurals

Cody Gilmore, “Parts of Propositions” (ms.)

Cody Gilmore, “Slots in Universals” (ms.)

Chris Tillman and Greg Fowler, “Propositions and Parthood” (ms.)

Joshua Spencer, paper in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics* (forthcoming)