

**Philosophy 868: Topics in Philosophy of Language**  
Fall 2019

Time: Th 3:00–4:50 PM  
Location: 3097 Wescoe

Instructor: Ben Caplan (he/him/his)  
Office: 3079 Wescoe  
Office hours: T Th 11:00–11:45 AM  
T 2:30–4:00 PM  
Or by appointment  
Email: caplan@ku.edu

**Description**

This seminar will be on names, natural kind terms, race terms, gender terms, and pronouns.

We will read work by E. E. Constance Jones; Gottlob Frege; Saul Kripke; Delia Graff Fara; Yu Izumi, Masashi Kasaki, Yan Zhou, and Sobei Oda; Sally Haslanger; Joshua Glasgow; Jennifer Saul; Talia Mae Bettcher; Esa Díaz-León; and Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak.

**Requirements**

Quiz	5%
Short writing assignment	10%
Problem set	20%
Final paper	65%

The quiz will be on the use–mention distinction and related terminology. It is worth 5% of the final grade; but, to receive a passing grade, 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 final paper should be 10–12 pages.

Due dates for the short writing assignment and the problem set will be announced in class at least one week in advance.

The final paper will be due at the end of finals week, on Friday, 20 December 2019. You must meet with me to get your topic approved and to discuss your final paper beforehand.

## 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

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 seminar easier if you have already taken Introduction to Symbolic Logic (or the equivalent).

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

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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).

## **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, since some students prefer taking notes, or reading texts, on such devices.

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>

If you use a laptop or other electronic device in class, please try to sit somewhere where your screen is less likely to be visible to others.

## **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 schedule will depend on the pace at which we get through the material in class.

There is no class on Tuesday, 15 October 2019 (Fall Break) or Thursday, 28 November 2019 (US Thanksgiving).

## **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.

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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.

*Names and natural kind terms*

E. E. Constance Jones, *Elements of Logic as a Science of Propositions* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1890), §2 (“Names and Terms”), §6 (“Import and Classification of Categorical Propositions”).

Gottlob Frege, “Über Sinn und Bedeutung,” *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophische Kritik* 100 (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.

Delia Graff Fara, “Names Are Predicates,” *Philosophical Review* 124.1 (Jan. 2015): 59–117.

Yu Izumi, Masashi Kasaki, Yan Zhou, and Sobei Oda, “Definite Descriptions and the Alleged East–West Variation in Judgments about Reference,” *Philosophical Studies* 175.5 (May 2018): 1183–1205.

*Race terms*

Sally Haslanger, “What Good Are Our Intuitions?,” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 80 (2006): 89–118

Joshua Glasgow, *A Theory of Race* (New York: Routledge, 2009), Chapter 6 (“Constructivism, Revisionism, and Anti-Realism”).

*Gender terms*

Jennifer Mather 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.

Talia Mae Bettcher, “Trans Women and the Meaning of ‘Woman’,” in *The Philosophy of Sex*, ed. Nicholas Power, Raja Halwani, and Alan Soble (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013), 239–249.

Esa Díaz-León, “*Woman* as a Politically Significant Term: A Solution to the Puzzle,” *Hypatia* 31.2 (Spring 2016): 245–258.

*Pronouns*

Robin Dembroff and Daniel Wodak, "He/She/They/Ze," *Ergo* 5.14 (2018): 371–406.