

Phil 415:

Philosophy of Language

Winter 2015

ORAN MAGAL

E-mail: oran.magal@mcgill.ca

Office: Leacock 941

Lectures: Tuesday + Thursday 13:05-14:25

R-Phys 115

Office hours: Tuesday & Thursday 14:45–16:00

Why take this course?

This course is an entry-point into philosophy of language, which is a core area of analytic philosophy, both historically and at present. Moreover, the tools it has developed are widely used in other fields of 20th century and contemporary philosophy. The course is structured as a survey of some of the main topics in analytic philosophy of language; in addition to the textbook (see below), we will be reading a selection of 'modern classics' of the field (these will be provided on the course website).

Topics:

1. Logical analysis of language: Frege, Russell, and the emergence of analytic philosophy
2. Semantics and truth: Tarski, meaning and truth-conditions
3. Modality & possible-world semantics
4. Semantic externalism, 'rigid designators', and indexicals
5. Analyticity and the *a priori*
6. Challenges to 'mainstream' philosophy of language: Quine, Wittgenstein, and Chomsky

Required background:

No previous acquaintance with analytic philosophy is presupposed, but it is required to have taken at least one intermediate-level philosophy class before. Although the class includes no formal material, it is expected that students are able to understand the standard notation of symbolic logic, for example by having previously taken Introduction to Deductive Logic (PHIL 210) or a similar course (e.g., COMP 230).

Required reading material: The textbook for the course: S. Soames, *Philosophy of Language*, Princeton University Press, 2010. In support of independent bookstores, it will be available from The Word, 469 Milton Street (near University Street Gates). **NB.** Cheques and cash only; no credit cards.

Marking and Assessment: The final mark is composed of weekly reading journals (20%), a short paper due around the middle of the term (30%), and a final paper due at the end of the exam period as set by the university (50%). All work will be submitted and returned online through MyCourses. Ten short reading journals, approximately a paragraph in length, must be submitted over the course of the term (worth 2% each); they are to include some comments or questions on the reading material assigned for that week. The short paper is to be 800-1000 words in length, on one of the topics to be assigned. The final paper is expected to be around 2500 words long, either on one of the topics to be assigned, or on a topic proposed by the student, subject to approval *in advance*. Detailed instructions for each assignment will be given in class.

Policy for Late Work: Extensions to deadlines set will be granted only in **exceptional** circumstances, usually only for medical reasons and with a medical note or other, similar emergencies, appropriately documented. Late work will be penalised at the rate of 3 percentage points per day overdue.

McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity).