

BSCS

Data of courses form

Lecturer's name: Zsófia Zvolenszky

Position: full professor

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Title of the course: Philosophy of Language

Detailed syllabus of the course, with topics addressed in each 90-minute lecture (less than 2 pages):

Course description

Our words, sentences are about—refer to—things in the world: objects, people, events. Plausibly, the *meanings* of expressions play a central role in explaining this referential feature: for example, it is in virtue of the meaning of the word 'horse' that it refers to horses. But what exactly does this role played by meaning consist in? The answer is not at all straightforward. Consider these two sentences:

Mark Twain was a famous novelist.
Samuel Clemens was a famous novelist.

How does the meaning of the first sentence differ from the meaning of the second? After all, both are about the same individual: who was called Samuel Clemens but became famous under the pseudonym 'Mark Twain'. Yet—according to Gottlob Frege—the two sentences cannot have the same meaning because someone may rationally believe one (the first, say), without believing the other. This is what one of Frege's "puzzles" consists in, providing the starting point for contemporary philosophy of language. During the course, our aim is to gain a greater understanding of the nature of meaning, and its relation to reference, truth, communication.

Requirements:

Monday through Thursday, attend and participate in each seminar, taking notes whenever appropriate. Class participation for the course is worth 20 % of your grade.

For Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday,

- read all the assigned readings: 25–35 pages each day, and come prepared to discuss them in the seminar;
- based on the readings, write up each day 3 questions/comments, publishing them in the Moodle course forum by midnight; these make up 15 % of your grade;
- we'll be referring to the readings throughout the seminar, so be sure to bring with you electronic or hard copies of the readings assigned.

For Friday's final exam, review (i) your notes, (ii) the summaries of key points provided by the instructor, (iii) the daily readings (approximately 100 pages total), (iv) additional excerpts read and discussed in class (approx. 10 pages), and (v) an additional approx. 25 pages from the textbook we'll be using. The exam is thus based on about 135 pages of reading material. The final exam consists of multiple choice, short answer, and short essay questions. The exam makes up the remaining 65 % of your grade.

Required readings:

Alongside seminal texts in the philosophy of language (by Frege, Grice, Kripke and Strawson), and a recent survey article on racism in language use (by Langton, Haslanger and Anderson), one more reading will function as a "textbook":

- William Lycan (ed.) 2008: *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge (referred to as ‘Lycan’ in the schedule below). Excerpts from selected chapters will be assigned.

Electronic copies of all required readings will be available on the Moodle page for the course. The seminal texts (by Frege, Grice, Kripke and Strawson) can also be found in the following anthology:

- P. Martinich and D. Sosa (eds.) 2012: *The Philosophy of Language*, 6th edition. Oxford: OUP. (Previous editions are ok, except for Frege’s “Sense and Reference”, which appears in a different translation in earlier editions.)

Langton–Haslanger–Anderson’s survey article “Language and Race” can be found in the following anthology of essays:

- G. Russell and D. G. Fara (eds.) 2012: *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Language*. New York: Routledge.

The instructor will provide questions and key points to focus on as you read the text.

Optional readings:

- Other parts of Lycan’s book are worth checking out.
- See also the readings cited and suggested in Lycan’s book.
- See also other survey articles in the logy edited by Russell and Fara.
- See also the rest of Kripke’s 1980 book *Naming and Necessity*.
- See also additional papers and paper recommendations in the anthology edited by Martinich and Sosa.

Schedule:

(Page numbers for the excerpts will be specified in the detailed syllabus made available on the Moodle course page shortly before the course.)

November 12-16, 2018 (Monday through Friday)

Monday

Session I. Introduction, Frege on meaning and truth. In-class reading: excerpts from Frege: On Sense and Reference (1892)

Session II. A very brief introduction to logic

No advance readings. For the exam, read Lycan Chapter 1.

Tuesday

Session I. Russell on definite descriptions

Session II. Strawson on definite descriptions. In-class reading: excerpts from Strawson: On Referring (1950)

Read in advance: excerpts from Lycan Chapter 2 and Strawson: On Referring (1950).

Wednesday

Session I. Kripke on the reference of proper names

Session II. Kripke on the meaning of proper names

Read in advance: excerpts from Kripke: Naming and Necessity, (1970, 1980), Lectures 1& 2.

For the exam, read: excerpts from Lycan Chapters 3 & 4

Thursday

Session I. Grice on meaning

Session II. Grice on communication. And a case study: how might we, along Gricean lines, account for racism in language use? In-class reading: excerpts from Grice: Logic and Conversation (1967, 1975)

Read in advance: excerpts from Grice: Meaning (1948, 1957), Grice: Logic and Conversation (1967, 1975), excerpts from Lycan Chapters 7 & 13, and an excerpt from Langton–Haslanger–Anderson: Language and Race (2012)

Friday

Final exam

Short CV (less than half page):

Education, qualifications:

Habilitation, Institute of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös University (ELTE), September 2013.

Ph.D. in Philosophy, New York University, New York, U.S.A., Ph.D. in Philosophy in 2007.

B.A., Mount Holyoke College, Massachusetts, U.S.A., B.A. summa cum laude in 1997.

Current positions:

full professor, department chair (2019–, Department of Logic, Institute of Philosophy, Faculty of Humanities, Eötvös University (ELTE), Budapest, Hungary, (full-time faculty member since 2006)

Teaching:

Over 20 different courses taught at the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. levels, primarily in philosophy of language, logic, metaphysics and the philosophy of mind. Typically one course per term taught entirely in English (1998–)

Presentations:

Over the past decade and a half, over 70 invited and conference presentations in English, over 20 in Hungarian.

Citations, use in courses:

Zvolenszky's published work has been assigned course reading at (among others) Kyoto University, MIT, New York University, Northwestern University. Her work has been cited (among others) in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, the *Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Language*, the *Handbook of Modal Logic* series as well as in journals like *Noûs*, *Philosophical Studies*, *Mind & Language*, *Journal of Semantics*, *Natural Language Semantics*, *Language*, *Lingua* and *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*

Major grants, scholarships:

Marie Curie Fellow (2016–2018), Institute of Philosophy, Slovak Academy of Sciences, SASPRO scheme, Bratislava, Slovakia

Principal investigator in Grant No. K-116191 received from the Hungarian Scientific Research Fund (OTKA), entitled "Meaning, Communication; Literal, Figurative: Contemporary Issues in Philosophy of Language" (2016–2020)

Bolyai János Research Fellowship, Hungarian Academy of Sciences (2009–2012)

H. M. MacCracken Fellowship, New York University (1997–2002)

Four-year, full tuition scholarship at Mount Holyoke College (1992–1994, 1995–1997)

Important publications (5-10):

"Authors Creating Fictional Characters, either Intentionally or Inadvertently. In: *From Philosophy of Fiction to Cognitive Poetics. Issues in Philosophy of Language and Literature*. (Series: *Studies in Philosophy of Language and Linguistics*) Piotr Stalmaszczyk (ed.), Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 47–76.

"Fictional Characters, Mythical Objects and the Phenomenon of Inadvertent Creation. *Res Philosophica*, 2/93 311–333. Special issue *Philosophy of Fiction*, Joshua T. Spencer (ed.).

"Inferring Content: Metaphor and Malapropism. *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 15/44 163–182. A special issue on Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson's Philosophy of Language, Dunja Jutronic (ed.).

"Abstract Artifact Theory about Fictional Characters Defended — Why Sainsbury's Category-Mistake Objection is Mistaken." *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* vol. 5/2013, Fabian Dorsch and Dan-Eugen Ratiu (eds.), 597–612.

"Searle on Meaning, Analyticity and Proper Names." *Organon F* 2012/19, Supplementary Issue 2, Juraj Hvorecký and Petr Kot'átko (eds.), 109–136.

"Four Decades of *Naming and Necessity*." (in Hungarian) In *Naming and Necessity* (translated by Tibor Bányai). Zsófia Zvolenszky (ed.), Akadémiai, Budapest, 2007, 151–218.

"A Semantic Constraint on the Logic of Modal Conditionals." In Beáta Gyuris, László Kálmán, Chris Piñon, Károly Varasdi (eds.), *Proceedings of the Ninth Symposium on Logic and Language (LoLa 9)*. Budapest: Révai Digital Press, 2006. 167–177.

"Is a Possible-worlds Semantics of Modality Possible?" In Brandon Jackson (ed.), *Semantics and Linguistic Theory XII*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2002. 339–358.

"On Inclusive Reference Anaphora: New Perspectives from Hungarian." With Marcel den Dikken and Anikó Lipták. In Karine Megerdooian and Leora Anne Bar-el (eds.) *WCCFL 20: Proceedings of the 20th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics*. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, 2001. 137–149.

See also Zvolenszky's 2015 essay at phil.elte.hu/zvolenszky/main/jointCV.pdf entitled "Simultaneous Pursuit of Wisdom and Motherhood", about sustainable conferencing for a parent with a baby.