

**Philosophy of Language**  
**Philosophy 271/Linguistics 271**  
*Provisional Syllabus*  
Jason Stanley  
Connecticut Hall 302

This is an introductory course in Philosophy of Language. Language is a tool. Its use as a tool to convey information has been at the center of most of the research in analytic philosophy of language in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Questions about the nature of the information language conveys have been at the forefront, as well as questions about how language conveys the information it does – how much is due to the literal meaning of expressions used, or how much is due to the general, all-purpose reasoning accompanying speech. But it is a tool that can be used for good or for ill, and towards the end of the course, we will also study some of its problematic uses. Our goal is to show the wide variety of topics that Philosophy of Language encompasses, from classical puzzles including the problem of cognitive significance, the problem of negative existentials, and the Sorites paradox, to issues such as the role of language in silencing speech.

January 13

*Overview*

*The Problem of Cognitive Significance*

January 15, 17, 22

Gottlob Frege, “On Sense and Reference”

January 27 & 29 *The Description Theory of Names*

Bertrand Russell, “On Denoting”

*First Paper Assigned*

February 3, 5, 10 & 12

*Naming and Necessity*

Saul Kripke, Naming and Necessity  
Robert Stalnaker, “Possible Worlds”, “Propositions”

*First Paper Due* February 12

*The Problem of Intentionality*

February 17 & 19

Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'"  
Karl h Wilson, "What's in a Name?", *Boston Review*

February 24 & 26

*Semantics and Pragmatics*

Paul Grice, "Logic and Conversation"  
Paul Grice, "Further Notes on Logic and Conversation"  
Donald Davidson, "Truth and Meaning"

March 2

Tarski truth definition handouts

March 4

*Midterm Exam*

March 23 & 25

*The Problem of Vagueness*

Delia Graff Fara, "Shifting Sands"

April 6 & 8

*Presupposition*

David Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"  
Robert Stalnaker, "Pragmatic Presupposition"

*Second Paper Assigned*

April 13 & 15

Rae Langton and Caroline West, "Scorekeeping in a Pornographic Language Game"  
Marina Sbisa, "Ideology and the Persuasive Use of Presupposition"

April 20 & 22

Jennifer Saul, "Dog Whistles, Political Manipulation, and the Philosophy of Language"  
TBD

*Second Paper Due*

*Graded Requirements*

There will be two 3-5 page essays assigned, a midterm and a final. Grades will be based upon these assignments, and class attendance and participation.