

PH305H/PH405H Theories of Meaning

30 credits. 11 weeks.

PLEASE NOTE CAREFULLY:

The full set of school regulations and procedures is contained in the Undergraduate Student Handbook which is available online at your MyAberdeen Organisation page. Students are expected to familiarise themselves not only with the contents of this leaflet but also with the contents of the Handbook. Therefore, ignorance of the contents of the Handbook will not excuse the breach of any School regulation or procedure.

You must familiarise yourself with this important information at the earliest opportunity.

COURSE CO-ORDINATOR

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Students are asked to make themselves familiar with the information on key institutional policies which been made available within MyAberdeen (<https://abdn.blackboard.com/bbcswebdav/institution/Policies>). These policies are relevant to all students and will be useful to you throughout your studies. They contain important information and address issues such as what to do if you are absent, how to raise an appeal or a complaint and how seriously the University takes your feedback.

These institutional policies should be read in conjunction with this course guide, in which School specific policies are detailed. Further information can be found on the [University's Infohub webpage](#) or by visiting the Infohub.

TIMETABLE

Level 3: one 1.5 hour lecture and one 1.5 hour tutorial per week.

Level 4: one 1.5. hour lecture and one 1.5 hour seminar per week.

Note that tutorials and seminars start in **week 2** of course.

See student portal or MyTimetable for times and venues.

Students can view their university timetable at

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/infohub/study/timetables-550.php>

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In the last 150 years philosophers have made important contributions to our understanding of the workings of human language. During the same period, studying of the structure and properties of language and linguistic representation have come to play a central role in philosophical methodology in metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. This course covers both the contribution philosophers make to the understanding of language, and how this understanding in turn contributes to philosophical discussion beyond the Philosophy of Language.

In the first two parts of the course, we will focus on two central approaches to the philosophical study of language—that we explain linguistic meaning in terms of *reference* and *truth*; and that we explain linguistic meaning in terms of *speakers' communicative intentions*. We will study the work of Gottlob Frege (1848-1925) and H.P. Grice (1913-1988) in details as paradigm examples of these approaches.

In the final part of the course, we will look at two applications of results in the Philosophy of Language in other areas of Philosophy—the metaphysics of modality, and harmful speech.

INTENDED AIMS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

On completion of the course, students should

Level 3 and 4:

1. Be able to use different kinds of academic literature appropriately to aid learning and help develop research projects.
2. Know what data and phenomena philosophical accounts of linguistic meaning are trying to account for.
3. Understand how at least two representative accounts of linguistic meaning explain the data and phenomena.
4. Understand standard philosophical methods used to produce philosophical accounts of linguistic meaning.
5. Be able to apply those methods in order to test any philosophical account of linguistic meaning.

Level 4 only:

6. Be able to clearly explain to others the content of and arguments for and against at least one philosophical account of linguistic meaning.

LECTURE/SEMINAR PROGRAMME AND CORE READING

Week	Topic	Intro/survey reading	Primary text(s)
1	Introduction	Lycan, chs. 1, 2 and 5	None
2	Descriptivism	Miller, chs.1 and 2 Lycan, chs.1 and 2	None
3	Kripke, I: Objections to Descriptivism	Lycan, ch.3.	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , selection.
4	Kripke, II: Rigidity and the Causal-Historical Theory of Reference	Lycan, ch. 4	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , selection.
5	Grice on Intention and Meaning, I: Speaker Meaning	Lycan, ch.7	Grice, ‘
6	Grice on Intention and Meaning, II: Conversational Implicatures	Lycan, ch.13	Grice, ‘Logic and Conversation’.
7	Speech Act Theory	Lycan, ch.12	Austin, ‘Performative Utterances’

			Searle, <i>Speech Acts</i> , ch.3.
8	Applications, I: Identity and Necessity	Lecturer's notes	Kripke, 'Identity and Necessity'.
9	Application, I: Identity and Necessity (continued)	Lecturer's notes	Kripke, <i>Naming and Necessity</i> , selection.
10	Application, II: Harmful Speech	Lecturer's notes	Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts"
11	Application, II: Harmful Speech	Lecturer's notes	tba
Revision Week	Review		Optional: Soames, "Reference and Description" Sperber and Wilson, "Pragmatics"

For full references, see course reading lists on MyAberdeen.

TEXTBOOK READING

I will regularly refer students to the following textbook (available online via library catalogue):

William Lycan (2000/2008/2018) *Philosophy of Language: a contemporary introduction*, Abingdon: Routledge. (Any edition will work.)

ASSESSMENT

Level 3:

- Three short comprehension essays. (Worth 20% overall.)
- One critical essay (2000-2500 words). (40%.)
- One take home exam. (40%.)

Level 4:

- Classroom leadership exercises. (20%.)
- One critical essay (3000-3500 words). (40%.)
- One take home exam. (40%.)

To view the CGS Descriptors please go to **MyAberdeen- Organisations-Divinity, History, & Philosophy Student Information for Undergraduates**. The link to the CGS Descriptors is on the left hand menu.

PLEASE NOTE: In order to pass a course on the first attempt, a student must attain a Common Grading Scale (CGS) mark of at least E3 on each element of course assessment. Failure to do so will result in a grade of no greater than CGS E1 for the course as a whole.

If you submit your work on time, you can expect that feedback will **normally be provided within three working weeks** (excluding vacation periods) of the submission deadline.

ASSESSMENT DEADLINES

Level 3:

- Three short comprehension essays. (Worth 20% overall.) **Due** end of week 4, 8 and 10.
- One critical essay (2000-2500 words). (Essay questions on MyAberdeen.) (40%.) **Due** end of week 6.
- One take home exam. (40%.) **Due** 7th December.

Level 4:

- Classroom leadership exercises. (20%.) Seminar presentation slots assigned at beginning of term.
- One critical essay (3000-3500 words). (Essay questions on MyAberdeen.) (40%.) **Due** 23rd November.
- One take home exam. (40%.) **Due** 14th December.

SUBMISSION ARRANGEMENTS

Submit a .doc or .docx and include the word count.

Submit by the due date, no hard copy will be required unless directly requested by the course coordinator through [MyAberdeen](#).

In advance of uploading, please save the assignment with your student id number listed in the filename, i.e. 59999999 DRXXXX Essay 1.

When asked to enter a title for the assignment, please enter a title identical to the name of your saved assignment, i.e. 59999999 DRXXXX Essay 1.

Please note: failure to submit by the due date (unless a prior arrangement has been made) will result in a deduction of marks. Where no submission is received, this will result in a mark of zero.

Please note: *Safeassign* text matching software will be used, however the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy reserves the right to also submit material to *TurnitinUK* when deemed necessary.

EXAMINATION

Information on how the examination paper will be structured, if necessary, such as how many questions, etc. **General exam guidance will be given in the Student Handbook.**)

Past exam papers can be viewed at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/library/learning-and-teaching/for-students/exam-papers/>.

Please Note: Candidates whose first language is not English may refer to English/native tongue dictionaries, when permitted by their Schools to do so. Electronic dictionaries are not permitted in the examination venue. Invigilators are entitled to request inspection of dictionaries prior to the examination, thumbing through them to check that there is no extra written material present.