

PY3701: Language and Reality

Autumn 2012

https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/mms/module/2012_3/SI/PY3701/

Module coordinator and lecturer (philosophy of language): Dr. Ephraim Glick
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Office Hours: Tu 14:00-15:00 (but feel free to request meetings at other times)

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Office Hours: Fri 11:00-12:00

GENERAL INFORMATION

- **Lectures:** Wed 11:00-13:00, Location TBD
- **Tutorials:** You must sign up for a weekly tutorial after the end of the first lecture. To choose a group and sign up, use MMS. Tutorials begin in the week commencing Monday 24th September.
- **Course content:** The first half of the module will cover some central issues in philosophy of language, the second half central issues in metaphysics.

Philosophy of language: We will focus mainly on the semantics and meta-semantics of descriptions and names. What does the name 'Ephraim Glick' mean? Does it have any semantic function other than picking out a certain individual? What is correct logical analysis of the definite description 'the PY3701 module coordinator'? Do such descriptions express the meanings of proper names? In investigating these questions, we will see that their answers have surprising ramifications elsewhere in philosophy.

Metaphysics: In this second half of the course we will discuss a number of foundational questions about the nature of reality and its occupants. What is it for something to be possible, impossible, or necessary? Are there objects other than those located in space and time? How do objects continue to exist despite changing in their properties? What is the relationship between parts and wholes? We will end by thinking about the nature of metaphysics itself.

- **Learning outcomes:** By the end of the module, students should have gained an understanding of some central theories that address the questions above. They should be familiar with the main considerations for and against those theories. They will also have increased their skill at analysing texts, formulating, defending, and criticising arguments, and articulating their own ideas in written work and in discussion.

ASSESSMENT

- **Workload:** This module is worth 30 credits; hence it should typically occupy half of your working week. The standard university working week is 37.5 hours, so ***this module should occupy about 18 hours per week, of which only three are spent in class.*** You will neither achieve the grade of which

you are capable, nor gain much satisfaction from the course, unless you plan your study accordingly.

- **Weighting and components:** 50% coursework, 50% exam, mandatory tutorials. You will pass the module only if you turn in both coursework essays, take the exam, and miss at most two tutorial sessions.

Coursework: Two essays of 1750 words each. The deadline for the first essay is 23:59 on Friday 19 October, and for the second 23:59 on 16 November. Full details of marking criteria for essays can be found in the [Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates](#). **Please note the following requirements for the essay:**

- Essays must be submitted via MMS.
- Essays must be word-processed and double-spaced. Formatting in .doc is preferred, but .rtf or .pdf is acceptable.
- Essays will be marked anonymously, so **do not include your name** anywhere in the document.
- On the first page of your essay, write your matriculation number, the module name and number, your tutor's name, the essay question you've answered, and **the following statement:** 'I hereby declare that the attached piece of written work is my own work and that I have not reproduced, without acknowledgement, the work of another'.
- Essays must not exceed 1750 words; you must **provide a word count** at the end of your essay. Include in the word count everything except your bibliography; that is to say, the word count must include footnotes, quotations, etc.
- Your **bibliography** must give full details of all sources consulted. If you quote from or paraphrase any of those sources in your essay, you must give clear references that allow the sources to be identified in the bibliography. Further information about academic integrity and plagiarism can be found in the [Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates](#).

Essay 1: Write 1750 words in response to **one** of the two prompts below.

- What is the problem of non-substitutivity of names, and how does Frege propose to solve the problem? Critically evaluate his proposal.
- What is the problem of true singular negative existentials? Explain and critically evaluate Russell's proposed solution to the problem.

Essay 2: Write 1750 words in response to **one** of the two prompts below.

- Are claims about numbers literally true (or false)? Or is their apparent truth (or falsity) better explained by paraphrase?
- Do possible worlds exist? If so, are they concrete or abstract?

- **Tutorials:** Attendance at tutorials is compulsory, just like submission of written work for assessment. If you are absent from three or more tutorials without authorisation, you will receive a 0x for the module with no right to reassessment.

For each tutorial session, complete the assigned reading with the following questions in mind: What is the central claim the author is defending? What are the author's arguments for that claim?

- **Exam:** The exam will last three hours and will consist of a number of short-answer questions on topics from throughout the semester. Details will be provided in the final lecture.

ASSIGNED READINGS

- **Core texts:** All essential readings for the Language half of the module will be available on the MMS page apart from the following, which you should purchase:
 - Kripke, Saul. *Naming and Necessity*. Harvard University Press.

Essential readings for the Reality half of the module are in:

- Sider, T., Hawthorne, J., and Zimmerman D., eds. *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*. OUP.
- **Further readings:** Further readings related to each topic will be suggested in lectures. You will need to read some of these in order to prepare for the essays and exam. You are encouraged to contact Dr. Cotnoir or Dr. Glick for help or advice in this connection.

The following, some of which will be on short loan in the main library, also might help you revise and write your essays:

- Hale, B. and Wright, C. (1997) *A Companion to the Philosophy of Language* (Blackwell).
- Lycan, W. (2008) *Philosophy of Language: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge).
- Loux, M. (1998) *Metaphysics: A Contemporary Introduction* (Routledge). Available electronically
- Lowe, E. J. (2002) *A Survey of Metaphysics* (Oxford University Press).
- Carroll, J. and Markosian, N. (2010) *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (Cambridge University Press).

RESOURCES

- **Libraries:** Besides the Main Library, be aware of the Philosophy Department Library (Edgecliffe Room 107).
- **Online texts:** Many useful texts are available online. To find electronic journals and books, follow the link to electronic resources on the library's main page.
- **Research tools:** [GoogleScholar](#) can point you in the direction of books, articles (it links to JSTOR etc if you're on the university network), authors, authors who've cited those authors, and so on. It's a good way to find out if a publication has generated discussion in the philosophical literature (click on the relevant 'Cited By' link). There are several useful online encyclopaedias that can provide you with introductions to topics as well as some technical details: the [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), the [Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#), and [Philosophy Compass](#).
- **Guidance on writing philosophy essays:** You can find helpful guidance online in the department's [Philosophy Handbook for Undergraduates](#). Paper copies are also available in the department office.

The handbook also has important information about school policies, resources, and issues like academic misconduct.

Finally, very useful writing advice is available on the website of Jim Pryor (NYU): <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

SCHEDULE

Preseasonal task:

- Reading: Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 3, Chapters 1-3 (link on MMS)
- While reading, think about what Locke means when he says that names “signify” ideas.

Week 1

17/09–18/09 *No tutorials*

19/09 *Lecture: Course Overview / Ideas, Meaning, and Reference*

Week 2

24/09–25/09 *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: Berkeley, *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Introduction (link on MMS); Mill, *A System of Logic*, Ch. 1-2.5 of Book 1 (link on MMS)
- Recommended reading: Wittgenstein, *The Blue Book*; Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, Ch. 14 (link on MMS)

26/09 *Lecture: Meaning and Reference*

Week 3

01/10–02/10 *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: Frege, “Sense and Reference”, in *Philosophical Review* 57:3 (link on MMS)
- Optional extra readings (difficult): Salmon, *Frege’s Puzzle*; Kripke, “Frege’s Theory of Sense and Reference: Some Exegetical Notes”

03/10 *Lecture: Reference and Descriptions*

Week 4

08/10–09/10 *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: Russell, “On Denoting”, in *Mind* 14:56 (link on MMS)

- Recommended reading: Strawson, “On Referring”, in *Mind* 59:235 (link on MMS), Russell, “Descriptions”, ch 16 of *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (link on MMS)
- Optional extra readings: Kaplan, “What is Russell’s Theory of Descriptions?”; Kripke, “Russell’s Notion of Scope”

10/10 Lecture: Names, Necessity, and Identity

Week 5

15/10–16/10 Tutorial

- Essential reading: Essential reading: Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1981, pp. 34-53, pg. 77 (the clarifying comments on “rigid designators”), pp. 97-105 (from ‘I think the next topic...’), pp. 15-20 (from ‘I will say something briefly about possible worlds’)
- Optional background reading: Mackie, “Transworld Identity” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; Hughes, *Kripke: Names, Necessity, and Identity*; Fitch, *Saul Kripke*.

17/10 Lecture: Names and descriptions

18/11 Essay 1 deadline: 23:59

Week 6

22/10–23/10 Tutorial

- Essential reading: The remainder of *Naming and Necessity*, Lectures 1 and 2 and Preface
- Recommended reading: *Naming and Necessity*, Lecture 3

24/10 Lecture: Modality

Week 7

29/11–30/11 Tutorial

- Essential reading: Bricker, “Concrete Possible Worlds”; Melia, “Ersatz Possible Worlds”

31/11 Lecture: Abstract objects

Week 8

05/11–06/11 Tutorial

- Essential reading: Dorr, “There are no Abstract Objects”; Swoyer, “Abstract Entities”

07/11 Lecture: Persistence

Week 9

12/II–13/II *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: Sider, “Temporal Parts”; Hawthorne, “Three-Dimensionalism vs. Four-Dimensionalism”

14/II *Lecture*: Parts and wholes

16/II **Essay 2 deadline: 23:59**

Week 10

19/II–20/II *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: van Cleve, “The Moon and Sixpence: A Defense of Mereological Universalism”; Markosian, “Restricted Composition”

21/II *Lecture*: Metaontology and the nature of metaphysics

Week 11

26/II–27/II *Tutorial*

- Essential reading: Hirsch, “Ontological Arguments: Interpretive Charity and Quantifier Variance”; Eklund, “The Picture of Reality as an Amorphous Lump”

28/II *Lecture*: Review and exam preparation