

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE
PHIL 425, Sec. 1001: MW 1pm-2:15pm in CBC C146
University of Nevada Las Vegas
Spring 2022

TOPICS LIST FOR FINAL EXAM REVIEW

Performatives and Speech Acts

Locutionary Act, Illocutionary Act, Perlocutionary Act

Illocutionary force vs. propositional content

Kukla on discursive injustice

Grice on intentions generating the non-natural meaning (content) *and illocutionary force* of utterances

Speaker-meaning vs. conventional meaning

Grice on conversational implicature

Semantic-value (what it is generally and what different kinds of semantic-values are had by different kinds of linguistic expressions, and what semantic-value is important for)

Compositionality—both of semantic-value and of meaning more broadly

Meaning **not** being a matter of definition or of necessary and sufficient conditions

Wittgenstein's language-games and family resemblance relations

Ideational Theory of meaning (e.g., Locke's view) and worries about it

Meaning as a psychological element (e.g., Elbourne's Chomskyan view)

Referentialism, aka naïve semantics

Frege's distinction between sense and reference—what they are in general, how they are related, and what the sense and reference are for different kinds of linguistic expressions, including whole sentences.

The linguistic puzzles that motivate Frege to posit sense as a dimension of meaning in addition to reference

Compositionality of sense

Customary sense becoming the (indirect) reference in contexts like “believes that”
Worries about Fregean sense (both metaphysical/epistemological and from giving up
“semantic innocence”—i.e., expressions having different references in embedded
contexts from the references they have in free-standing contexts)

Definite descriptions—Russell’s analysis

Meinong’s “semantically simple but metaphysically complex” referentialism

Problems for Meinong’s view

Russell’s 3-claim “underlying logical form” analysis of sentences employing definite
descriptions

How Russell’s analysis addresses the linguistic puzzles he considers (Note: these overlap
with Frege’s puzzles)

Russell as a referentialist, but of a complicated (non-naïve) sort

How Russell’s analysis eliminates nominal expressions (nouns) in favor of combinations
of just predicates, variables, and quantifiers

Russell on “common” names

First-level functions as the semantic values of predicates

Second-level functions as the semantic-values of quantifiers

Descriptivism vs. direct reference theory of names

How Frege and Russell are Descriptivists

Cluster Theory version of Descriptivism (summarized by Kripke)

Kripke’s modal and epistemological objections to Descriptivism

Rigid designators vs. non-rigid designators

Kripke’s explanations of necessity/contingency and a priori/a posteriori, and how they
can be combined in unexpected ways (such as a posteriori necessities)

Kripke’s causal-historical account of the way that names get their referents

Internalism vs. Externalism in semantics

How Kripke’s account of name reference is a direct reference, externalist account

Putnam on how natural kind terms get their reference—how meaning “ain’t in the head”.

Why XYZ is not water, even if people on Twin Earth call it “water”.

Division of linguistic labor—deference to experts within one’s linguistic community.

Chomsky on I-language vs. E-language. Why I-language involves a special-purpose language faculty or “module”, making I-language internal, psychological (“in the head”), individual, and innate (poverty of the stimulus argument).

Tomassello’s external use-theory of language acquisition, denial of innateness, no special-purpose language faculty.

Davidson’s notion of a Theory of Meaning for a language and the 3 conditions such a theory must meet.

Getting from an intensional account of meaning (including one appealing to meaning entities) to an extensional account (using the connective “iff”, i.e., “if, and only if”).

How using a Tarski truth-definition for a *whole language* performs a kind of “filtering” among true biconditionals, ruling out “‘Snow is white’ is true-in-English iff grass is green” as a meaning specification, while allowing “‘Snow is white’ is true-in-English iff snow is white.”

Soames’ argument from the “‘Snow is white’ is true-in-English iff snow is white and $2+2=4$ ” case that a theory of meaning needs meaning entities (propositions) to get the right truth-conditions specified in meaning specifications for sentences.

Russellian propositions (à la Soames—structured, worldly components, fine-grained) vs. propositions as sets of possible worlds (unstructured, coarse-grained) or sets of situations (getting finer-grained).

Inferentialist alternative to truth-conditional semantics (where semantic correctness comes out of pragmatic correctness).

Inferential network, understood in terms of “the game of giving and asking for reasons” and commitments and entitlements to moves. Incompatibilities providing objectivity.

Wittgenstein on understanding not being a mental state and following a rule not being a matter of an instruction or formula in mind. Impossibility of private rule-following.

“Kripke’s Wittgenstein’s” skeptical paradox, puzzles about correctness in following a rule, and the normative aspect of meaning.

Constitutive Skepticism (“there is no fact of the matter”) about objective meaning correctness pointing to assertibility semantics instead of truth-conditional semantics.