Philosophy of Language

Spring 2011, T/Th 11–12:15
194 Mercer St., #305
http://tedsider.org/
teaching/language.html

“No politician from Belgium has ever worn 23 hats at once.”—You have never seen that sentence before, yet you understood it. How? The answer must be that you know what its words mean (you’ve seen them before, after all). But what kinds of things do words mean? How do words get their meanings? And how exactly do word-meanings combine to generate sentence-meanings? We will study classic articles by Frege, Russell, Kripke, Putnam, Quine, Davidson, Lewis, Grice and others, on such topics as reference, descriptions, names, quantifiers, natural kind terms, propositional attitudes, conversational implicature, speech acts, logical positivism, analyticity, truth and meaning, meaning and use, and indeterminacy.

Office hours

Ted Sider (ted.sider@nyu.edu): Thursdays, 2:00p–3:00p and by appointment. 5 Washington Place #506.

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Readings


Requirements

Two in-class exams, worth 35% each, March 22, and May 12 at 10:00am
Short paper (2–3 pages), worth 10%, due in class on February 15
Longer paper (4–7 pages), worth 20%, due in class on May 5
Semantics

1/25  Martinich’s introduction, sections I–VI; Mill, “Of Names”
1/27  Frege, “On Sense and Nominatum”
2/1   Frege continued
2/3   Russell, “On Denoting”, and “Descriptions”
2/8   Kripke, “Naming and Necessity”
2/10  Kripke continued
2/15  Putnam, “Meaning and Reference” (may skip) *(short paper due)*
2/17  Kripke, “A Puzzle about Belief”
2/22  Quine, “Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes” or Kaplan “Quantifying in”
2/24  Kaplan, selections from “Demonstratives” (to be distributed)
3/1   Perry, “The Problem of the Essential Indexical”
3/3   catch-up

Pragmatics

3/8   Austin, “Performatives Utterances”
3/10  Grice, “Logic and Conversation”
3/22  Exam 1
3/24  Stalnaker, “Assertion”
3/29  Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game” (to be distributed)
3/31  catch-up

Foundations

4/5   Frege, “The Thought”
4/12  [Something on deflationism?][Something by Dummett?][Hempel?]
4/14 Grice, “Meaning”
4/19 Lewis, “Languages and Language” (maybe skip)
4/21 Quine, “Translation and Meaning”
4/26 Davidson, “Belief and the Basis of Meaning”
5/5 catch-up (*longer paper due*)