

COURSE DETAIL

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Country

Netherlands

Host Institution

Utrecht University

Program(s)

Utrecht University

UCEAP Course Level

Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)

Philosophy

UCEAP Course Number

110

UCEAP Course Suffix**UCEAP Official Title**

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

UCEAP Transcript Title

PHILOSOPHY LANGUAGE

UCEAP Quarter Units

6.00

UCEAP Semester Units

4.00

Course Description

The central question to be addressed in this course is: what is meaning? The starting point for the development of the line of thought of this course is the opposition between two intuitions. The first intuition is that the basis of meaning is located in the mind. Students discuss and read the paradigm defense of this claim: Locke's thesis that the meaning of words is the collections of ideas associated with that word in the mind of the speaker. The second intuition is that the meaning of language resides in the connection between language and items in the world. The course then discusses how Frege tries to resolve these issues by introducing his fundamental distinction between sense and reference. The course covers Russell's extremely complicated writings on the theory of descriptions and touches on the philosophy of logical atomism that he developed together with the young Ludwig Wittgenstein. Strawson's criticism of Russell's theory of descriptions is discussed, followed by an examination of Donnellan's proposal to resolve their disagreement. The course then turns to a more formal approach to language and truth: Tarski's highly influential recursive definition of truth for a finite, formal language and his subsequent application of this theory to informal languages. This formal approach stands in sharp contrast to pragmatic approaches to language that is considered next. Austin's ordinary language philosophy is an attempt to analyze philosophical problems via an analysis of the way the words in which these problems are formulated are being used in ordinary language. H. P. Grice is also sensitive to the pragmatic aspects of language, but he favors a more systematic and reductive account of meaning. In sharp opposition to these attempts to provide meaning with a foundation either in the mind or in reality stands Quine's attack on the very idea that there are facts about meaning. According to many, the most important philosopher of the twentieth century has been Ludwig. Students read fragments of this work, with special emphasis on his attack on the Augustinian picture of language, the thesis that meaning is use, and the rule-following considerations. On that last topic, students also look at Kripke's controversial interpretation of these passages in Wittgenstein's work.

Language(s) of Instruction

English

Host Institution Course Number

FI3V19006

Host Institution Course Title

PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

Host Institution Course Details**Host Institution Campus**

Humanities

Host Institution Faculty**Host Institution Degree****Host Institution Department**

Philosophy and Religious Studies

Course Last Reviewed[Print](#)