PHIL 206
Introduction to the Philosophy of Language
Fall 2020

Instructor: Daniel Skibra

Time and Location: M, W 9:30-10:45 AM, **online**

Contact: email: dskibra@uic.edu

Office Hours: W, 12:00-1:00 PM, or by appointment

Course Description

In this course we will address some important philosophical questions about language. We will examine the nature of communication and the difference between lan- guage and other systems of communication. We will examine how to describe the rules by which language works. We will examine the connection between language and logic. And we will look at how language is involved in the social, ethical, and political dimensions of our lives.

Course Method of Instruction

This course will be a synchronous course with a substantial portion of asynchronous material which will be administered through Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, Panopto, and Blackboard. The course's Blackboard page will serve as the hub for the course. You will not need other telecommunications programs aside from those made accessible through Blackboard. Our Wednesday session (Wed., 9:30 – 10:45 AM) will be reserved for our synchronous Zoom meetings. Asynchronous lectures will go proxy for our Monday session. You should expect to dedicate about between an hour to an hour and 15 minutes each week to view the asynchronous lectures. You can view them at your lecture, but you will need to do so *before* our Wednesday meeting every week.

Required Technology

Online students will need regular access to a personal computer that runs on a broadband Internet connection. Please contact ACCC to request and borrow a laptop or be assigned a hotspot for the semester if you do not have the required hardware and internet capabilities.

Course Objectives

Students will:

- learn to understand philosophical arguments

- develop their own informed views on the topics of study

- present the arguments of the philosophers ands theorists as well their own views in clear prose

- subject both the views studied as well as their own to critical scrutiny.

Course Requirements

Assignments

Writing Assignments : 125 points

- Position paper (3 – 4 pages)   40 points
- 4 responses (15 pts. ea.)   60 points
- Journal assignment   20 points
- Reflection piece   5 points

Mid-term: 30 points
Final Exam: 30 points
Question presentation: 15 points

Notes on assignments

Resources for writing a philosophy paper:

- `http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html`

Grading

There will be a total of 200 points to earn in this class by the end of the term. A record of the points you have earned will be displayed in Blackboard. The percentage of points you earn will be converted into letter grades as follows:

A	: $[89.5\%, 100\%]$		D	: $[59.5\%, 69.5\%)$
B	: $[79.5\%, 89.5\%)$		F	: $<59.5\%$
C	: $[69.5\%, 79.5\%)$			

Course Policies

What to Expect

Here is what a typical week would look like when you are taking this class. You will access the course material on Blackboard. The course material will be organized by week, so simply navigate to the appropriate week, where all you have to do for the week is laid out in the

weekly module. Each module will contain a breakdown of the week's work, reproducing the information on the syllabus, but with more detail and instructions. A typically week will include readings, videos of lectures, and the assignments for the week. Unless I advise otherwise, aim to do the week's reading *before* watching the lectures. Some weeks will have a heavier reading load than others, but I aimed to keep the reading load manageable. Still, the readings are challenging, so be prepared to take your time with them.

You should expect to watch about an hour's worth of lectures a week. Take notes while watching these much as you would during a regular class period. The lectures will compress the material a bit, so expect for it to take you longer than an hour to watch, when you account for your note taking, stopping the video, and re-watching parts of the lecture as needed. The lectures will be embedded directly into Blackboard, so you can stream them to your computer or mobile device.

As indicated above, the lectures will be delivered asynchronously, and will go proxy for what would have been our Monday meeting. For our Wednesday meeting, we will meeting over Zoom on our dedicated time (9:30 AM – 10:45 AM) which you will also access via Blackboard.

To do well in this course, you have to be committed to putting the work in every week. It's a manageable amount, but if you let it slide for a week or two, you run the real risk of falling behind. If you encounter any trouble in the course (with the material, with assignments, or with the technology), send me an email. I am happy to help, discuss, and meet with you (virtually) as necessary.

Attendance

In face-to-face classes, I take attendance. Since we are not meeting in a classroom, I obviously won't be passing around a sign-in sheet. Nonetheless, your attendance is required in this course. There are two ways that I will manage attendance for the course. First of all, I will take attendance during our live meetings. You are required to be in attendance for those. Second, I will monitor that you are indeed watching the lectures. (The application that hosts the videos on Sakai, Panopto, allows me to track viewership, and I will be monitoring this.)

If you miss more than three live Zoom meetings over the course of the term, your final grade will drop by 5 points, and another 5 points for each additional missed Zoom meeting. If you expect to miss a Zoom meeting, but have a valid excuse for this which you can provide documentation of (doctor's note, etc.), I will excuse the absence.

For the lectures, if your viewership drops below 75% (so, you watch less than 75% of the lectures), your final grade will drop by 5 points. For every additional 5% below that benchmark, your final grade will drop another 5 points. Since you can watch the lectures at your own leisure, the only way you can be excused from this is if you become really sick at some point, and can provide a doctor's note.

Privacy Notification and Policy for Video Recording of Synchronous Class Sessions

We will be recording the class sessions, or portions of the class, for students who are unable to attend synchronously. The recording feature for others is disabled so that no one else will be able to record this session through Zoom, Blackboard Collaborate, Webex, or Echo360. Recording by other means is not permitted. The recorded class sessions will be posted on our Blackboard class website unless otherwise notified.

If you have privacy concerns and do not wish to appear in the recording, turn OFF your video and notify me in writing (via email) prior to the next class session. If you prefer to use a pseudonym instead of your name, please let me know what name you will be using, so that I can identify you during the class session. If you would like to ask a question, you may do so privately through the chat feature by addressing your question to me only (and not to *everyone*), or you may contact me by another private method, which we will agree upon in advance of class. If you have questions or concerns about this video recording policy, please contact me before the end of the first week of class.

Online Course Communication Guidelines (Netiquette)

- Be mindful of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as different political ideologies and religious beliefs.

- Use good judgment when composing your written responses. Swearing and profanity should be avoided. Also consider that slang terms can be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

- Be careful using all capital letters when composing your written responses. This can be considered "shouting" on the Internet and is regarded as impolite or aggressive. It can also be stressful on the eye when trying to read your message.

- Be respectful of others' views and opinions.

- Be careful when using acronyms. If you use an acronym it is best to spell out its meaning first, then put the acronym in parentheses afterward, for example: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs). After that you can use the acronym freely throughout your message.

- Use good grammar and spelling in written communications.

- In emails, always identify yourself and what class and section you are in. It is a good practice to put your course and section in the subject line. This helps your instructor identify course related emails.

Disability Accommodation Procedures

UIC is committed to full inclusion and participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of university life. If you face or anticipate disability-related barriers while at UIC, please

connect with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at drc.uic.edu, via email at drc@uic.edu, or call (312) 413-2183 to create a plan for reasonable accommodations. In order to receive accommodations, you will need to disclose the disability to the DRC, complete an interactive registration process with the DRC, and provide me with a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). Upon receipt of a LOA, I will gladly work with you and the DRC to implement approved accommodations.

Academic Integrity – Student Community Standards

UIC is an academic community committed to providing an environment in which research, learning, and scholarship can flourish and in which all endeavors are guided by academic and professional integrity. In this community, all members including faculty, administrators, staff, and students alike share the responsibility to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty and quality of academic work so that such a collegial and productive environment exists. As a student and member of the UIC community, you are expected to adhere to the Community Standards of integrity, accountability, and respect in all of your academic endeavors. When accusations of academic dishonesty occur, the Office of the Dean of Students investigates and adjudicates suspected violations of this student code. Unacceptable behavior includes cheating, unauthorized collaboration, fabrication or falsification, plagiarism, multiple submissions without instructor permission, using unauthorized study aids, coercion regarding grading or evaluation of coursework, and facilitating academic misconduct. Please review the UIC Student Disciplinary Policy for additional information about the process by which instances of academic misconduct are handled towards the goal of developing responsible student behavior. By submitting your assignments for grading you acknowledge these terms, you declare that your work is solely your own, and you promise that, unless authorized by the instructor or proctor, you have not communicated with anyone in any way during an exam or other online assessment. Let?s embrace what it means to be a UIC community member and together be committed to the values of integrity.

Extension Policy

The due dates for the assignments are as they appear on the syllabus. Late assignments will not be tolerated, and will accumulate deductions of one third of a letter grade for every day the assignment is late. If you think you will need an extension for an assignment, you need to request one at least two days before the due date. Do not ask after the date has passed, or the night before the deadline.

Email/ Communication

The best way to reach me is via email. However, give me around 24 hours to respond during the week. If you email me after 5pm on Friday, don't expect a response until Monday morning. Most of the time, I will be able to respond to you sooner than this, but please plan your emails accordingly. When there is a paper due, get all of your questions to me 48 hours before the due date.

I will answer *simple, specific* questions over email pertaining to the course material or the logistics of the course. I can also address simple interpretive questions you have with the material, or arguments you are trying out for your papers. To address anything more involved, you'll need to meet with me virtually in office hours. (I highly encourage you to make use of this time at some point anyway.)

Required Texts

- All course readings will be provided as pdfs on the course Blackboard site. You do not have to purchase a book for this class.

Reading Schedule*

*The readings and assignments are due in the week they are listed. You should aim to complete the readings before watching the asynchronous lectures, and you should certainly have done them by our Wednesday synchronous session.

Week	Date	Assignment	Length
Introduction: a simple conception of language and meaning			
Week 1	Aug 24	Course Introductions **Reading:** William Lycan – *Introduction: Meaning and Reference*	6 pages
Names and Descriptions: complicating the simple conception			
Week 2	Aug 31	**Note:** Monday is Labor Day **Reading:** Bertrand Russell – *On Denoting* **Assignments:** Position Paper 1 assigned	15 pages
Week 3	Sept 7	**Reading:** John Searle – *Proper Names* **Assignments:** Position Paper 1 due	8 pages
Week 4	Sept 14	**Reading:** Gottlob Frege – *Sense and Reference* **Assignments:** Responses to position paper 1 due	22 pages
Week 5	Sept 21	**Reading:** Saul Kripke – *Naming and Necessity*; Lecture 2 **Assignments:** Position Paper 2 assigned	36 pages
Understanding Language: what do we know when we know a language?			
Week 6	Sept 28	**Reading:** H.P. Grice – *Meaning* William Lycan – *Truth Condition Theories: Davidson's Program* **Assignments:** Position Paper 2 due	31 pages
Week 7	Oct 5	**Reading:** Noam Chomsky – *Language and Problems of Knowledge* **Assignments:** Responses to position paper 2 due	29 pages

Doing Things With Language: speaking and communicating			
WEEK 8	Oct 12	**Reading:** J.L. Austin – *Performative Utterances* Betty Birner – *Speech Acts* **Assignments:** Mid-term assigned	52 PAGES
WEEK 9	Oct 19	**Reading:** H.P. Grice – *Logic and Conversation* David Lewis – *Scorekeeping in a Language Game* **Assignments:** Mid-term due Position paper 3 assigned	30 PAGES
WEEK 10	Oct 26	**Reading:** Sanford Goldberg – *What is Assertion?* **Assignments:** Position paper 3 due	33 PAGES
When Communication Goes Awry: language use beyond the parochial			
WEEK 11	Nov 2	**Note:** Election day! **Reading:** Harry Frankfurt – *On Bullshit* (pure coincidence) **Assignments:** Responses to position paper 3 due Position Paper 4 assigned	20 PAGES
WEEK 12	Nov 9	**Reading:** Rae Langton – *Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts* Jennifer Hornsby – *Disempowered Speech* (recommended, but not required) **Assignments:** Position Paper 4 due	38 PAGES
WEEK 13	Nov 16	**Reading:** Miranda Fricker – *Testimonial Injustice* Kristie Doston – *Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing* **Assignments:** Responses to position paper 4 due Position paper 5 assigned	43 PAGES
WEEK 14	Nov 23	**Note:** Thanksgiving is this week **Reading:** Tali Mendelberg – *the Political Psychology of Implicit Communication* Jennifer Saul – *Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation and Philosophy of Language* **Assignments:** Position paper 5 due	47 PAGES
WEEK 15	Nov 30	Jason Stanley – *Language as a Mechanism of Control* **Assignments:** Responses to position paper 5 due Journals due Reflections due	53 PAGES
FINAL EXAM	TBD	Final Exam due by the end of the designated exam time for this class	