PHIL 216: Introduction to the Philosophy of Language

Fall Term 2022-23/ SGW Campus (3 credits)

Instructor:	Natalie Helberg (Lecturer, Department of Philosophy)
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Telephone:	TBA
Office hours:	Thurs. 10am-12pm (note: there will be no office hours the first week of class)
Class schedule:	Fr 11:45AM - 2:30PM, H 557 SGW

Calendar description: This course provides an introduction to the main problems in the philosophy of language, concerned with the analysis of the concepts of meaning, reference, truth, necessity.

Course description: We will engage with frameworks for thinking about language which have emerged from analytic and continental philosophical traditions. We will consider key ideas, puzzles and questions that have guided philosophers of language. What is language and how might it operate as a means of expressing thoughts and worldly states of affairs? Does 'meaning' hinge on language's ability to 'map on' to thoughts and things? How do literary works 'mean'? How can expressions take on new meanings in new contexts? Can language transform reality? What is involved in translation? The course will have a political dimension as well, as we will consider the ways in which language games can participate in cultural hegemony in addition to the ways in which hate speech operates to injure.

Required texts: A few texts must be purchased for the course. The rest of the readings will be available in electronic form via Moodle, thanks to Course Reserves. For electronic readings, look on Moodle under the week the reading has been scheduled for (and make sure not to forget that you must also do any readings from the texts you've purchased that have been assigned for the week). The texts that must be purchased through Concordia Book Stop:

Michael Morris: *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language* (Cambridge UP, 2007)

Jacques Derrida: *Monolingualism of the Other; or, The Prosthesis of Origin* (Stanford UP, 1998)

Judith Butler: *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (Routledge, 1997)

Course objectives: 1) Expose students to key ideas, puzzles and questions within the philosophy of language. 2) Give students a sense of this subfield as it has been determined by the analytic tradition *and* indicate respects in this subfield might fruitfully transform when placed in communication with the continental tradition. 3) Provide students with opportunities to practice

specifically philosophical forms of writing. 4) Provide students with a chance to do philosophical assignments more creative in nature for participation marks.

How the course will run and expectations:

We will meet in the room that has been assigned to us when the course is scheduled to run. There will be one exception to this rule on October 28th: class is cancelled that day as I'm away at a conference. Masks in the class are an option, though they are not mandatory. Attendance is not mandatory, but it will be very difficult to succeed in the class if you simply attempt to do the readings alone. I will be connecting the readings in specific ways as I lecture and the assignments submitted for the class that score the highest will be those which reflect an engagement with the live class itself. I will provide notes (via Moodle) indicating the main topics, ideas, and moves we made during lecture. That is: I will provide people with the broad strokes of a given lecture, but to know exactly what was said in detail, a person would have to come in and listen and make notes for themselves.

Doing the readings will be key. The readings you choose to write papers on will be the ones that you have to engage with the most carefully and most intensely, but try to at least expose yourself to all the readings. You may not understand a given text at first (many of our readings are challenging) but exposing yourself to it will be a necessary step towards wrapping your head around it. Lectures will clear things up even more.

Assignment requirements:

*Note that you are free to submit assignments in French if you wish to.

1) Participation Exercises: 4 in total marked out of 100 (worth 2.5% each) = 10% of total grade

> *I will announce the specific exercises you are required to do in class. I will announce what the first exercise is on September 23rd. I will announce the second on October 14th, the third on November 11th and the fourth on November 25th. **These exercises will be due via Moodle by 11:59pm on the Sunday after they are announced** (Exercise 1 is due on September 25th; Exercise 2, on October 16th; Exercise 3, on November 13th; Exercise 4, on November 27th). This means you will have a little over 2 days to work on each one.

> Language is all around us! Some philosophers have even cast it as part of the structure of human existence, so intimate is its relation to our lives. For each exercise, I will ask you to find a unique piece of language (one from outside of the class and our readings) which speaks to our preoccupations in the class; I will also ask you to analyze it using the concepts and ideas we're familiarizing ourselves with in the class. The 'analysis' part of the assignment should only be between 100 and 200 words in length. **The important thing will be to show your reader you really understand what we're learning about**

in the course and can take what we're learning and use it to reflect on/have interesting thoughts about the language you encounter in your life.

2) Short paper (1250-1500) due **Oct. 9th** via Moodle at 11:59pm (topics distributed Sept. 25th): 20% of total grade. Please submit the essay as a PDF (this makes it easier to grade within the Moodle environment).

3) **November 4th**: In-class, closed-book multiple choice and short-answer exam (a few sentences will be required for each short-answer response)

4) Final Paper (2500-3000 words) due on Moodle by 11:59pm on Dec. 16th (during the exam period): 50%

Requesting extensions and late policy: To hand in an assignment late, you must have good reasons for doing so and must negotiate a new arrangement with me in advance of the deadline; otherwise—or at least barring exceptional circumstances, which will require documentation—a late penalty will apply to your work. You will lose 3% per day late, regardless of whether these days are workdays or weekend days.

Grading scheme:

Philosophy Department Statement Regarding Grades and Grade Distribution:

1) The Undergraduate Calendar 16.3 specifies that As, Bs, and Cs are for "outstanding," "very good" and "satisfactory" work, respectively. The Philosophy Department interprets this to mean that: Cs are awarded for work that is adequate, yet in some way fails to completely meet all expectations and requirements; Bs are awarded for work that fully meets all expectations and requirements; As are reserved for outstanding work that exceeds expectations and requirements by, e.g., demonstrating outstanding rigour, clarity, or insight.

2) In 200 & 300 level courses with over 30 students, it is normally expected that: the grade average will be in the C+ to B- range; there will be no more than 25% As.

Numerical Equivalents:

A- 80-84% 3.7 GP	A 85-89% 4.0 GP	A+ 90-100% 4.3 GP
B- 70-72% 2.7 GP	B 73-76% 3.0 GP	B+ 77-79% 3.3 GP

C- 60-62% 1.7 GP	C 63-66% 2.0 GP	C+ 67-69% 2.3 GP
D- 50-52% 0.7 GP	D 53-56% 1.0 GP	D+ 57-59% 1.3 GP

I emphasize that A-range grades are reserved for work that EXCEEDS expectations and requirements. Outstanding, A-range work will be work that grounds itself in a rigorous engagement with the course readings and sets itself apart by advancing notably original ideas, by making unique connections between ideas, or by in other ways demonstrating keen philosophical insight. A-range essays (and participation exercises) will be clear and well-composed as well. They will abide by proper academic citation requirements.

The evaluation scheme and more in light of extraordinary circumstances*:* In the event of extraordinary circumstances and pursuant to the <u>Academic Regulations</u>, the University may modify the delivery, content, structure, forum, location and/or evaluation scheme. In the event of such extraordinary circumstances, students will be informed of the changes.

Important advice*:* If a special condition or circumstance in your life may or will affect your performance, please let me know about it as soon as possible. It will be treated with the strictest confidence. Please do not wait until the condition or circumstance is impending or has already happened before telling me about its impact on you. If something unanticipated occurs, bring it to my attention and we will work out a way of dealing with it.

Accessibility*:* I will strive to make the course as accessible and inclusive as possible. If you have accessibility needs that require academic accommodations, please meet with an advisor from the Access Centre for Students with Disabilities (ACSD) as soon as possible to set up an accommodation plan. I welcome meeting with all students to discuss their accessibility needs.

Undergraduate general assignment policies*:* Ensure that you keep backup copies of your work in paper and/or electronic form. This is good common sense. Don't make the mistake of typing up an assignment in a hurry on a library computer without saving it to an online account at the university or elsewhere, to a memory key, etc. Consider purchasing a small USB key that you can carry with you at all times with your work on it, or finding an online resource such as DropBox or SugarSync where you can store files. Also, develop good backup practices: turn on the timed auto-recover function in your word processor, the save backup copy function, and get in the practice of saving versions of your work under a new name when you start making drastic revisions (or use version management functions of your word processor). Also note that according to the calendar (16.3.9.2) "Students are responsible for the preservation of any material, in its entire and original form, which has been returned to them."

Academic integrity: Your academic Code of Conduct makes it very clear that plagiarism, as well as any other form of academic dishonesty, is entirely unacceptable. The Code defines plagiarism as "the presentation of the work of another person as one's own or without proper acknowledgement" (CU Undergraduate Calendar; the Code goes on to state other offences). This could be material copied word for word from books, journals, internet sites, professor's course notes, etc. It could be material that is paraphrased but closely resembles the original source. It could be the work of a fellow student, for example, an answer on a quiz, data for a lab report, a paper or assignment completed by another student. It might be a paper purchased through one of the many available sources. Plagiarism does not refer to words alone - it can also refer to copying images, graphs, tables, and ideas. "Presentation" is not limited to written work. It also includes oral presentations, computer assignments and artistic works. If you translate the work of another person into French or English and do not cite the source, this is also plagiarism. If you cite your own work without the correct citation, this too is plagiarism. In Simple Words: DO NOT COPY, PARAPHRASE OR TRANSLATE ANYTHING FROM ANYWHERE WITHOUT SAYING FROM WHERE YOU GOT IT! DON'T FORGET TO USE QUOTATION MARKS!

Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are highly disruptive of the learning that we should be doing here. Should I detect any form of academic dishonesty, including plagiarizing from the internet, from books, journals, other students, etc., I will report it directly to the Vice-Dean of Academic Affairs. The penalties for plagiarism tend to be rather severe, and in any case undermine your learning process. So avoid it. In case of doubt as to what counts at plagiarism, ask me. Cite your sources and inspirations; this enriches your ideas by showing their roots in the thoughts of other people, and does not detract from your exposition, articulation, and development of ideas.

Note on intellectual property: Content belonging to instructors shared in online courses, including, but not limited to, online lectures, course notes, and video recordings of classes remain the intellectual property of the faculty member. It may not be distributed, published or broadcast, in whole or in part, without the express permission of the faculty member. Students are also forbidden to use their own means of recording any elements of an online class or lecture without express permission of the instructor. Any unauthorized sharing of course content may constitute a breach of the Academic Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Rights and Responsibilities. As specifed in the Policy on Intellectual Property, the University does not claim any ownership of or interest in any student IP. All university members retain copyright over their work.

Note on behaviour: All individuals participating in courses are expected to be professional and constructive throughout the course, including in their communications. Concordia students are subject to the Code of Rights and Responsibilities which applies both when students are physically and virtually engaged in any University activity, including classes, seminars, meetings, etc. Students engaged in University activities must respect this Code when engaging with any members of the Concordia community, including faculty, staff, and students, whether

such interactions are verbal or in writing, face to face or online/virtual. Failing to comply with the Code may result in charges and sanctions, as outlined in the Code.

Note on gender neutral language & human diversity: In addition to all the other reasons for using gender neutral language and language that attends to human diversity, there are philosophical reason for this too. Philosophy demands that we think very carefully, clearly and rigorously about human life and ideas. To do this well, we have to attend to the diversity of human life. Otherwise we build in and reinforce prejudices that betray who we are as human beings. Using gender neutral language in your writing and speaking reminds us that human beings are diverse in gender, that not all of them are "he." And this reminds us of further diversities of human being. There are different ways of approaching the task of keeping gender and other differences in mind, e.g., substituting "she" where "he" might have traditionally been expected, alternating systematically between the two, using "she/he," and so on. No formal procedure is adequate to the task, for the task is improving your thinking and that of our culture and future generations, and the form of thinking adequate to this cannot be set in advance. For helpful discussion and guidelines, Google: Warren, Virginia L. "Guidelines for the Nonsexist Use of Language."

Note on pronouns: All course participants have the right to request which names and pronouns instructors use to refer to them. I respect this right and will do my best to satisfy any of these requests. If you want to be called by a name other than what is listed on the class list, please feel free to pass along the information to me. If I mistakenly use the wrong pronoun when referring to you, please advise me as soon as possible.

Note on sexual violence: Concordia's [Policy Regarding Sexual Violence](#) defines sexual violence as "any violence or misconduct, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality. This includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault; sexual harassment; stalking; coercion; sexist, homophobic and/or transphobic jokes; indecent exposure; stealthing; voyeurism; degrading sexual imagery; recording and distribution of sexual images or video of a member of the University without their consent; cyber harassment or cyber stalking of a sexual nature or related to a person's sexual orientation and gender identity and/or presentation."

The Policy further defines sexual assault and harassment.

- The Philosophy Department condemns sexual violence. The Department encourages all students to report sexual violence to the Department Chair, the Dean, or to the Office of Rights and Responsibilities.

- Concordia's [Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)](#) is an important resource on campus for students needing support, accompaniment, resources or information about sexual violence. SARC may convene a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to support a survivor/victim reporting sexual violence. See the [Policy](#) for further details.

- Other resources include the [Centre for Gender Advocacy](#) and the [CSU Advocacy Centre](#).

- The Philosophy Department welcomes Concordia's Consensual Romantic Or Sexual Relationships Guidelines, which "strongly discourage[] all instructors from commencing or continuing any consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student."

__Territorial acknowledgment:__

I would like to acknowledge that Concordia University is located on unceded Indigenous lands. The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters on which we gather today. Tiohtiá:ke/Montreal is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples. I respect the continued connections with the past, present and future in our ongoing relationships with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.

__List of student services/resources:__

Counselling and Psychological Services
Concordia Library Citation and Style Guides
Student Success Centre
Health Services
Financial Aid and Awards
HOJO (Off Campus Housing and Job Bank)
Academic Integrity
Access Centre for Students with Disabilities
CSU Advocacy Centre
Dean of Students Office
International Students Office
Student Hub
The Otsenhákta Student Centre
Birks Student Service Centre
Sexual Assault Resource Centre

Reading Schedule

*Note: We will do our best to keep to our schedule, but if some topics require slightly more time to cover, then we will allow them to spill over into subsequent weeks.

Weeks	Readings
1	

Intro to Philosophy of Language	
Sept. 9/2022	Welcome to the class and introductory lecture! The intro lecture will bear on the following texts. You can keep reading these chapters next week, if you don't manage to do them this week! Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 1: Locke and the Nature of Language." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 5--20. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 2: Frege on Sense and Reference." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 21-48. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 3: Russel on Definite Descriptions." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 49-73. Benjamin, Walter. 1968. "Theses on the Philosophy of History." *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. New York: Schocken. 253-64.
2 The Picture-Theory of Language vs. Ordinary Language Philosophy	
Sept. 16/2022	Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1921. Selections from *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. Project Gutenberg. Link in to e-text available through Moodle (https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/5740). Read: 2, 2.01, 2.0201, 2.0271, 2.0272, 2.031, 2.032, 2.034, 2.1, 2.11, 2.12, 2.13, 2.131, 2.151, 2.18, 2.21, 3.14, 3.141, 3.144, 3.2, 3.201, 3.21, 3.323, 3.324, 3.325, 3.326, 4, 4.001, 4.002, 4.003, 4.0031, 4.021, 4.022, 4.024, 4.027, 4.03, 4.11, 4.112, 4.113, 4.114, 4.115, 4.116, 5.6, 5.61, 6.432, 6.44, 6.5, 6.51, 6.52, 6.521, 6.522, 6.53, and 6.54 (it's not as much as it looks like!). Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 15: Wittgenstein on the Augustinian Picture." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 292-311.
3	

Puzzles related to Rule-Following *Sept. 23/2022*	***Participation Exercise #1 announced in class** Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2001. Selections from *Philosophical Investigations*. Malden; Oxford: Blackwell. Read sections (they are all clearly marked by number): 7, 10-11, 18-21, 23-24, 43-44, 54-55, 65-67, 80, 83, 108-109, 111, 115, 118-119, 124, 141-147, 185-187, 189-190, and 197-201. Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1961. Selections from *On Certainty*. New York: Harper & Row. Read sections (they are all clearly marked by number): 605-612. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 4: Kripke on Proper Names." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 74-93. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 14: Kripke on the Rule-Following Paradox." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 271-291.
Sept. 25 (Sunday)	***Topics Distributed for First Paper (see Moodle)**
4 Language Games and Power *Sept. 30/2022*	Foucault, Michel. 1996. "The Discourse on Language." *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Ed. Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater. New York: Routledge. 339-360. Lyotard, Jean-François. 1984. Selections from *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. Read: xxiii-xxv, 3-16, and 66-67.
5 Meaning and Context *Oct. 7/2022*	Derrida, Jacques. 1982. "Signature Event Context." *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago P. 307-330.

Oct. 9/2022 (Sunday)	De Saussure, Ferdinand. 1996. "Selections from the 'Course in General Linguistics.'" *The Continental Philosophy Reader*. Ed. Richard Kearney and Mara Rainwater. New York: Routledge. 289-304. ***First Paper due on Moodle by 11:59pm**
6 Meaning and Context Oct. 14/2022	***Participation Exercise #2 announced in class** Continue with Derrida, Jacques. 1982. "Signature Event Context." *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago P. 307-330.
7 The Complex Phenomenon that is Translation *Oct. 21/2022*	Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 10: Quine and Davidson on Translation and Interpretation." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 194-213. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 11: Quine on the Indeterminacy of Translation." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 214-230. Derrida, Jacques. 2002. "Des Tours de Babel." *Acts of Religion*. New York; London: Routledge. 102-134.
8 *Oct. 28/2022*	No class on this day (instructor away at conference). Focus on studying for next week's exam and reading for the course. :)
9 Midterm *Nov. 4/2022*	In-class, closed-book multiple choice and short-answer exam (a few sentences will be required for each short-answer response)

10 Being Strangers to our 'Own' Language *Nov. 11/2022*	***Participation Exercise #3 announced in class** Derrida, Jacques. 1998. *Monolingualism of the Other; or The Prosthesis of Origin*. Stanford: Stanford UP.
11 Speech Acts and Hate Speech *Nov. 18/2022*	Butler, Judith. 1997. "Burning Acts, Injurious Speech." *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge. 43-70. Morris, Michael. 2007. "Chapter 12: Austin on Speech Acts." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP. 231-247. Optional reading: Butler, Judith. 1997. Optional: "On Linguistic Vulnerability." *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge. 1-41.
12 Speech Acts and Hate Speech Continued *Nov. 25/2022*	***Participation Exercise #4 announced in class** Butler, Judith. 1997. "Sovereign Performatives." *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge. 71-102.
13 Conclude Material on Hate Speech and Wrap-Up *Dec. 2/2022*	Butler, Judith. 1997. "Implicit Censorship and Discursive Agency." *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. New York: Routledge. 127-164.

Exam Period *Dec. 9-Dec. 22/2022*	Final Essay due Dec. 16th (50%)