

I Instructor Information

Name: Dr. Bradley Rettler

Office: Ross Hall 128

Office Hours: Tuesday 11-12, Wednesday 1-3, and by appointment

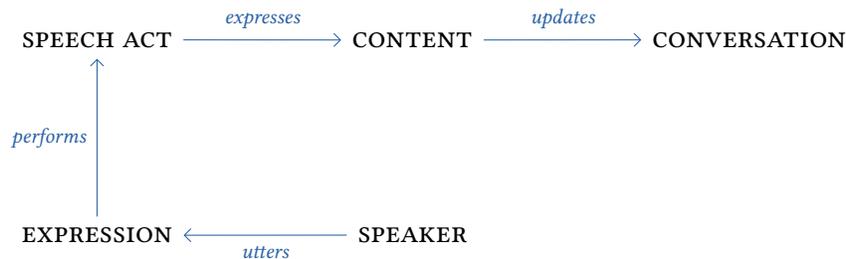
E-mail: brettler@uwyo.edu

Classroom: RH 135

Meeting Times: T 2:50-5:20

II Course Description

Language facilitates communication. Roughly, here's how that happens. A person performs an action by uttering an expression or sentence in a context. Content is thereby conveyed. Then the conversation changes in a systematic and rule-governed way.



This course will introduce students to the philosophy of language by exploring various perspectives on how to fill-out this picture of linguistic communication. We will read both classic and contemporary work from the philosophy of language and related branches of linguistics (*e.g.* natural language semantics) to explore the nature of speech acts, the boundary between semantics and pragmatics, conversational dynamics, and the differences between stated, presupposed, and implicated information.

III Goals

Philosophy of language is both a tool and a topic. It is a tool in that other corners of philosophy often rely on theories of language (*e.g.* metaphysics, epistemology, metaethics). It is a topic insofar as language can be studied for its own sake. Our goals reflect as much.

Language as tool

- + Learn the Lewis/Stalnaker semantics for counterfactuals
- + Learn about Gricean conversational implicatures
- + Learn about meaning that is not truth-conditional

Language as topic

- + Learn about the semantics/pragmatics boundary
- + Learn about the puzzles surrounding direct reference
- + Learn about different ways in which content is communicated

IV Required Readings

All readings will be posted in the “Files” section of Canvas.

V Evaluation

Participation: 20% of your grade. This includes coming to class, having (i) carefully done the reading, (ii) prepared an outline of the argument, (iii) prepared questions about anything you didn’t understand, and (iv) prepared objections to or arguments for the premises of the author’s argument. It also includes being involved in class discussion by sharing your thoughts, and by listening to your colleagues’ thoughts.

While perfect attendance does not guarantee a perfect score on this portion, excessive absences guarantees an imperfect one. You are permitted 1 absence without a university excuse. (To have an absence excused, see your Dean.) Each subsequent absence will take 5% off your participation grade.

Critical Responses: 40% of your grade. Ten times during the semester you will write a two-page (500 word) critical response paper and email it to me by 11:59pm the night before the class for which the reading is assigned. The papers will be an answer to the prompt about that day’s reading. Late papers will be 10% off if turned in after 11:59pm but before class, and 50% off if turned in after the class but before the final exam.

Final Paper Outline: 10% of your grade. You will write a half-page to 1 page outline of the argument for your final paper. It is due November 3. I will return it to you with comments, and may suggest that (or require that) you meet with me to discuss it. Late outlines will be 10% off per day late.

Final Paper: 30% of your grade. You will write a 2000-3000 word (8-12 page) final paper on a topic related to philosophy of language. You can write on any topic we discuss in class, or have another topic approved by me. Papers are due on the day of the final exam. Late papers will be 10% off per day late.

VI Changes

This syllabus is a guide. Circumstances may alter the reading and/or test schedules. All changes will be announced in class and posted on WyoCourses. You are required to check WyoCourses and your email at least once a week.

VII Expected Schedule

SEE WYOCOURSES FOR THE UP-TO-DATE SCHEDULE AND LINKS TO PAPERS!

MEANING

September 10: Frege (Sense)
September 17: Kripke (Reference)
September 24: Kaplan (Context)
October 1: Stanley (Enrichment)
October 8: Kaplan (Expressives)

CONTENT

October 15: Russell, Strawson (Presuppositions)
October 22: Grice (Implicature)
October 29: Potts (Implicature, continued)

DYNAMICS

November 5: Stalnaker (Scoreboard)
November 12: Heim (Files)
November 19: Roberts (Discourse)

SPECIAL TOPICS

November 26: Lewis (Counterfactuals)
December 3: Anderson, Bollinger (Slurs)
December 10: TBD by Vote – Humor, Propaganda, etc.