

Date prepared: 1/30/13  
Syllabus  
University of New Orleans  
Dept. of Philosophy

## PHIL 2411: Philosophy of Language (3 credits)

**SECTION 001:** LA 234, Tu/Th, 11:00 a.m.- 12:15 p.m.

### Contact Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Robert Stufflebeam  
**Office:** UNO: LA 385  
**Office Hours:** M-T-W-Th, 12:30 – 2:00 (and by appointment)  
**Office / Mobile:** see Moodle  
**Email:** [rstuffle@uno.edu](mailto:rstuffle@uno.edu) (add 'PHIL 2411' to subject line)  
**Course Webpages:** [Moodle](#) login page

### Required Texts

- [1] Martinich, A.P. & D. Sosa (2013): *The Philosophy of Language*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Oxford: OUP.  
[T] ISBN 9787-0-19-979515-4.
- [2] Supplemental readings. [O]

### Course Description

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** A critical survey and analysis of philosophical theories of meaning, reference, analyticity, synonymy, truth, and the relation of language to reality,

**COURSE OVERVIEW:** Doing philosophy requires using reason to resolve a fundamental question. Fundamental questions about the nature of language are philosophy of language questions. 20<sup>th</sup>-Century analytic philosophy was dominated by such questions. We shall focus on the following:

- What is the nature of language?
- What is the nature of a name?
- What is the difference between meaning (intension) and reference (extension)?
- What makes a definite description (e.g., 'The King of America is fan of Dr. Who.') true or false?
- What is the nature of propositional attitudes? What makes statements containing them true or false?
- What is the nature of truth? Is saying "'Snow is white' if and only if snow is white" saying something meaningful or vacuous?
- Is there a distinction between analytic truths and synthetic truths?
- What is the nature of linguistic indeterminacy?

This course will be run like a seminar. Accordingly, grades will be based on participation (and online discussions), a presentation ("discussion leader"), essay exams, and a philosophical research paper.

Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- to understand the nature of philosophy and its subfields
- to understand the difference between sufficient conditions, necessary conditions, and necessary *and* sufficient conditions
- to know how to construct a successful conceptual analysis
- to understand the nature of language, syntax, and semantics
- to understand the distinction between sense & reference, intension & extension, connotation & denotation
- to understand the philosophical problems associated with names, definite descriptions, propositional attitudes, etc.
- to understand the analytic-synthetic distinction
- to understand the nature of truth, the kinds of things that can be true, and Tarski's theory of truth
- to understand the indeterminacies of language
- to present and to defend your own views regarding the issues above
- to read philosophical texts
- to recognize metaphysical issues
- to lead philosophical discussions
- to write a philosophical research paper

Grades

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
<b>Participation</b>	(10%) 10 points	<b>A</b>	100 – 89.5 points
<b>One-minute args.</b>	(15%) 15 points	<b>B</b>	89.4 – 79.5 points
<b>Presentation</b>	(15%) 15 points	<b>C</b>	79.4 – 69.5 points
<b>Exam 1</b>	(20%) 20 points	<b>D</b>	69.4 – 59.5 points
<b>Exam 2</b>	(20%) 20 points	<b>F</b>	59.4 — 0 points
<b>Essay</b>	(20%) 20 points		

**PARTICIPATION:** You are required to be prepared and to participate. Preparedness includes printing the online material, reading the assigned material, bringing it to class, and coming to each class with a (written) question about the material. Participation includes your speaking in class. You cannot do any of these things if you do not attend class. Your participation is worth **10%** of your final grade. Its value will be based on your attendance, preparedness, and both the quantity and quality of your in-class contributions. After two absences, I shall penalize your participation grade by a letter for each subsequent absence.

**ONE-MINUTE ARGUMENTS:** At the end of most classes I shall post a question on the in the one minute argument forums section on Moodle. Your responses to those questions (and to the responses of other students) will allow you become engaged with the material/issues covered in class. Each student must post a response to these questions. Each response should be posted within 48 hours. Consider your responses to be "one-minute arguments." What that means is you will need to make a claim, give some evidence in support of that claim, and it should take me about 1 minute to read it. After posting your response, you may then post a response to someone else's response, continuing the discussion. Your one-minute arguments are worth **15%** of your final grade.

**PRESENTATION:** Each student will be required to lead the discussion on at least **1** of the assigned readings. Each presenter must submit a typed outline that summarizes the assigned reading(s) for that day, identifies the main arguments, and raises issues/questions for discussion. On the day of your presentation, make copies to distribute to me and to your classmates. You are required to submit a digital version of your presentation (**.doc**, **.docx**, or **.pdf**) via Moodle by midnight the day of your presentation. Name the file using the following convention: '**P1.+lastname+.extension**' (e.g., '**P1.Smith.docx**'). Title the presentation using the author and title of the assigned reading, presented by you. Your presentation is worth **15%** of your final grade.

**EXAMS:** There will be **2** take home essay exams, each covering about half of the course material. You may use your text and notes but ***you may NOT collaborate***. As in the paper, ***you must properly cite sources of all work that is not your own***. Consult me for advice in case of uncertainty. The exams are worth **40%** of your final grade.

**ESSAY:** Each student will be required to write **1** philosophical research paper. I'm not asking for just any paper. I'm requiring a specific type of essay organized and written in a specific type of way. Hence, you will be required to do more than merely survey/explain a specific problem/issue; you will also be required to make your own claim and to defend it. The **8-10 page** paper must be based on a topic listed on Moodle or approved by me, written in accordance with the guidelines on Moodle, and submitted via Moodle. You must also supply me with a hard copy too. ***You may NOT use sources available only online***. Your essay is worth **20%** of your final grade.

**EXTRA CREDIT:** Depending on enrollment, five points (percent!) extra credit is possible either via exams or by completing an additional presentation.

*DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: UNO is committed to providing for the needs of students who have disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students who qualify for services will receive academic modifications to which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of students who may require such services or modifications to register each semester with the Office of Disability Services (UC 260, 280-6222) and follow its procedures for obtaining assistance.*

What follows are my class policies. If for any reason you are unable to abide by these policies, you should withdraw from my course.

- ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:** Academic honesty is fundamental to the process of learning and to evaluating academic performance. **Academic dishonesty** includes the following: cheating (e.g., collaborating while taking an exam), plagiarizing, tampering with academic records or exams, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. I HAVE **ZERO TOLERANCE FOR ACADEMIC DISHONESTY!** If I find you guilty of cheating on an exam or plagiarizing your essay, not only will you receive a '0' on the assignment, I shall aggressively pursue both your receiving an overall 'F' AND a permanent blemish on your record. Refer to the UNO Judicial Code for further.
- ATTENDANCE:** Your attendance is required (and more than two absences count against your participation). Classes begin on time. Do NOT stroll in late. And if you know that you must leave class early, let me know.
- AUDITS:** Whether an audit is successful will depend only on your class participation performance.
- COMPUTERS/PADS:** If you use a computer or pad with which to take notes, that's fine. But you may NOT check email, Facebook, etc. during class.
- INCOMPLETES:** Incompletes are **STRONGLY** discouraged. Should you need to take an incomplete, arrangements must be made with me well before the last class meeting.
- CLASSROOM CONDUCT/SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Feel free to say anything to me or to your peers, but tailor your remarks so as not to be uncivil, abusive, or inappropriate. I will not tolerate ANY abusive behavior in the one minute argument discussions, so do not engage in any personal attacks or name calling. (See my 'warning' below.)
- LATE-STARTS:** There are no special dispensations for late-start students.
- LATE WORK:** A one-min. argument will be penalized a letter grade for each week it is late. An exam will be penalized a letter grade for each day it is late. The essay will be penalized a letter grade for each day it is late. If you do not submit an assignment by the time I turn in grades, you will receive a '0' for that assignment.
- MAKE-UPS:** Since the exams will be take home, there will be no need for a make-up.
- PARTICIPATION:** You are required to participate. Participation includes asking questions, answering questions, and contributing to discussions. Failing to do such things will constitute a failure to participate. So too will being unprepared. A failure to participate will be treated like an absence.
- PHONES:** Distracting interruptions are inconsiderate, disrespectful, and time-wasting. Phones should be turned off before class begins. Do NOT text during class.
- WITHDRAWALS:** You may withdraw from this course for any reason. Withdrawal is strictly up to you and none of my business. Look in the course listings for the last day to withdraw without a penalty — a 'W' appearing on your transcript.

**WARNING!** *Doing philosophy requires a willingness to think critically. Critical thinking does not consist in merely making claims. Rather, it requires offering reasons/evidence in support of your claims. It also requires your willingness to entertain criticism from others who do not share your assumptions. You will be required to do philosophy in this class. Doing philosophy can be hazardous to your cherished beliefs. Consequently, if you are unwilling to participate, to subject your views to critical analysis, to explore issues that cannot be resolved empirically, using computers, or watching Sci-Fi, then my course is not for you.*