

# SAMPLE SYLLABUS



Philosophy of language (PHIL-UA 9085)

## NYU PARIS

# Philosophy of language

PHIL-UA 9085

Instruction mode: in-person

Spring 2022

Syllabus last updated on: 1 December 2021

     **Lecturer contact information**  
TBA

### **Course description**

The course provides an introduction to contemporary philosophy of language, mainly but not exclusively in the analytic strand. The course is taught in a seminar, discussion-based style, and offered to undergraduate students. For details about topics to be covered, see section "Course schedule" below.

### **Prerequisites**

None, but students having taken a first course in logic or a first course in philosophy will find it valuable for this class.

### **Units earned**

Four (4).

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## Course details

- Sessions take place on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00am (sharp) till 10:30am. As a sign of respect to all those involved, please arrive in the classroom by 8h55.
- All times are CET (Central European Time) (Daylight Saving Time ends on Sunday, 27 March, 2AM).
- Location: NYU Paris Campus, 57 boulevard Saint-Germain, 75005 Paris room #406 (TBC).
- Course website: <http://inescrespo.altervista.org/nyu.html>
- Brightspace site: <https://brightspace.nyu.edu/d2l/home/154028>
- COVID-related details: In the interest of protecting the NYU Paris community, we are closely following CDC guidance around COVID-19 and adjusting our recommendations and policies accordingly. You will be assigned a seat on the first day and are expected to use that seat for the entire semester due to NYU COVID-19 safety protocol.

## Course overview and goals

The course will allow students to:

- Understand different problems and positions in philosophy of language. See section "Course schedule" below for details.
- Acquire an overview of how topics and positions in philosophy of language relate to considerations made in linguistics and psychology.
- Grasp and analyse the consequences that a view on language and meaning may have on neighbouring aspects of philosophical reflection, such as metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics.

Students will develop skills in:

- asking philosophical questions,
- understanding philosophical texts,
- producing and assessing philosophical arguments, from paragraph to essay.

## \_\_\_\_ Assessment components

### Class participation:

- You are expected to attend class in person. You are expected to come to all lectures. You are expected to read in advance so that they can meaningfully participate in the discussions in class. You are expected to actively participate in class. Meeting these expectations has a positive impact on the final grade.

### Assignments:

- There are four graded homework assignments.
- They should be submitted by email as a PDF file by the deadline indicated in the course planning.
- All cases of plagiarism will be penalised and reported to the university administration.
- Failure to submit or fulfill any required component may result in failure of the class, regardless of grades achieved in other assignments.

### Description of the assignments:

- HW#1: Book synopsis of 1000 words max. Open questions. Answers of 500 words max. each (not inc. ref. and fn.) should be given in a few well-constructed and cohesive paragraphs.
- HW#2: Study questions. Answers of up to 500 words each (not inc. ref. and fn.) should be given in a few well-constructed and cohesive paragraphs.

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- HW#3: Argumentative essay, up to 1200 words (not inc. ref. and fn.).
- HW#4: Argumentative essay, up to 2500 words (not inc. ref. and fn.).

## Calculation of the final grade:

The grade for this course will be determined according to the following formula:

- The average of the four mandatory homework assignments constitutes 99.00% of the grade.
- Excellent participation bonus: A bonus on the final grade—it will be increased by half a letter grade—will be granted to students who sustain excellent participation in class. Excellent participation cannot be defined univocally, but its definition in our context comprises at least the following requirements:
  - No unjustified absences or late arrivals.
  - Mandatory readings are up-to-date for every class.
  - Submissions are submitted on time.
  - Questions prompted by the course instructor or by a fellow student are relevantly answered, i.e., answers show that the student is up-to-date with the mandatory readings, and that the student has been engaged in the previous discussions which have taken place in class.

## **Required texts**

- **Novel:** Ferenc Karinthy [1970] (2008) *Metropole* (original title: *Epepe*), trans. from Hungarian by George Szirtes, London & San Francisco, Telegram Books. A free 14-day loan is available via <https://archive.org/details/metropole0000kari>
- **Reader:** available as a PDF on the course website: <http://inescrespo.altervista.org/nyu.html> It might be updated as we move along. You will receive a notification, should that happen. It contains the following mandatory readings:

- R. W. Fasold and J. Connor-Linton (eds.) (2006) *An Introduction to Language and Linguistics*, Cambridge, UK, Cambridge University Press, Introduction and chapters 1, 2, and 12.
- F. de Saussure (1916) [1959]: *Course in general linguistics*. C. Bally and A. Sechehaye (eds.), in coll. with A. Reidlinger.. W. Baskin (trans., introduction and notes), New York : McGraw-Hill. Introduction: ch. I-V (pp. 4-23). Part 1: ch. 1-II, pp. 65-78. Part 2: ch. I-IV, pp. 101-122.
- Plato (360 BCE) *Cratylus*, in J. M. Cooper (ed.) D.S. Hutchinson (ass.ed.) (1997) *Plato: Complete works* C.D.C. Reeve (trans. *Cratylus*) Hackett Publishing Co, pp. 141-196.
- C. Glymour (2015) *Thinking Things Through, An Introduction to Philosophical Issues and Achievements*. Second Edition, 2015. A Bradford Book. Part I, ch. 1, pp. 3-23.
- Fasold and Connor-Linton, *op. cit.*, chapters 3 and 4.
- Aristotle [350 BCE], *De Interpretatione* (in Greek: *Peri hermeneias*) 1-9(35), in J. L. Ackrill (ed.) (1987): *A new Aristotle reader*. Princeton University Press.
- Glymour (2015), *op. cit.*, part I, ch. 2, pp. 33-55.
- Glymour (2015), *op. cit.*, part I, ch. 4, pp. 91-109
- L. T. F. Gamut (1991) *Logic, Language and Meaning*, Volume I: "Introduction to Logic", University of Chicago Press, . Translation and revision of *Logica, taal en betekenis*, vol. I. Ch.2 (excerpts), Ch.3 (excerpts)
- Glymour (2015), *op. cit.*, part I, ch. 5, pp. 111-134.
- Gamut (1991), *op. cit.*, Ch.3 (excerpts)
- J. Locke (1690) *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, book iii, excerpts, version by J. Bennett, 2017, in [www.earlymoderntexts.com](http://www.earlymoderntexts.com) - Last visited: 27 January 2020.

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- J. Maat (2011): "Language and semiotics." In: *The Oxford handbook of philosophy in early modern Europe*, D.M. Clarke and C. Wilson (eds.). Oxford University Press.
- G. Frege (1918) [1956]. "The Thought: A Logical Inquiry". *Mind, New Series*, Vol. 65, No. 259, pp. 289-311.
- G. Frege (1892) [1952]: "On sense and reference." In *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege*. P. Geach and M Black (eds.) M. Black (trans.) Blackwell Publishing, pp. 56-78.
- B. Russell (1919) "Descriptions". An extract from Chapter XVI of his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*. London: Allen & Unwin. Reprinted in A.W. Moore, (ed.), *Meaning and Reference*, Oxford University Press, pp. 46-55.
- L. Wittgenstein (1921) [1922] *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, first published by Kegan Paul (London), side-by-side-by side ed., v. 0.42 (Jan. 5, 2015), containing the original German, alongside both the Ogden/Ramsey, and Pears/McGuinness English translations, available at: <http://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/> (We will read only some propositions.)
- R. Carnap (1934) "On the Character of Philosophical Problems", *Philosophy of Science*, vol. I, pp. 5-19, reprinted in R. Rorty (ed.) [1967] (1992) *The linguistic turn, Essays in philosophical method, with two retrospective essays*, London and Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, Part I, ch.2, 52-62.
- G. Bergmann (1953) "Logical Positivism, Language, and the Reconstruction of Metaphysics", *Rivista Critica di Storia della Filosofia*, vol. VIII, No 4, pp. 453-481, reprinted (in a truncated form) in Rorty *op. cit.*, Part I, ch.3, pp. 63-71.
- R. Carnap (1950), "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie*, vol. IV, pp. 20-40, reprinted in Rorty, *op. cit.*, Part I, ch.4, pp. 72-84.
- W. V. O. Quine (1975). "Mind and verbal dispositions". In S. Guttenplan (ed.), *Mind and Language*, Oxford: Clarendon Press. Reprinted in A.W. Moore, (ed.), *Meaning and Reference*, Oxford University Press, pp. 80-91.
- L. Wittgenstein (1953) [2009]: *Philosophical investigations*. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and J. Schulte (trans.) Rev. 4th ed. by P.M.S. Hacker and J. Schulte. §§138- 142: an anti-mentalist argument; §§143-155: what is it to understand the meaning of an utterance?; §§179-202: rules and their application.
- R. Rorty, "Introduction: Metaphilosophical Difficulties of Linguistic Philosophy", in Rorty, *op. cit.*, pp. 1-40.
- R. Rorty, "Twenty-five Years After", in Rorty, *op. cit.*, ch. "Two Retrospective essays by Richard M. Rorty", pp. 371-374.

## Supplemental text(s)

Optional materials will be posted on the course website. Here is a non-exhaustive list:

- D. Holdcroft (1991): *Saussure: Signs, System and Arbitrariness*. Cambridge University Press.
- W.V.O. Quine (1951): "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 60, No. 1 (Jan., 1951), pp. 20-43
- W. V. O. Quine (1960): *Word and Object*. MIT Press, ch.II, pp. 26-79.
- W. V. O. Quine (1992): *Pursuit of Truth*. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2003, ch. III "Meaning". Reprinted in A.P. Martinich (ed.) *The philosophy of language*. Oxford University Press, 3rd ed. Part VII, ch. 8, pp. 446-455.
- B. Russell (1905): "On denoting". *Mind*, Vol. 14, No. 56, pp. 479-493
- H. P. Stein (1997). *The fiber and the fabric. An inquiry into Wittgenstein's views on rule-following and linguistic normativity*. University of Amsterdam, ILLC Dissertation Series, ch. 5.
- L. Wittgenstein (1965). *The Blue and Brown Books*. Harper Perennial.

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## Course schedule

The planning might be updated as we move along. You will receive a notification, should that happen.

### Session 1 – Thursday 27 January 2022

Topic: Introduction

Reading: This syllabus and hopefully most of Karinthy (1970)

### Session 2 – Tuesday 1 February 2022

Topic: Discussion of *Epepe*

Reading: Karinthy (1970)

### Session 3 – Thursday 3 February 2022

Topic: A brief intro to linguistics 1

Reading: Fasold and Connor-Linton (eds.) (2006): Introduction, ch. 1, ch. 2 and ch. 12.

### Session 4 – Tuesday 8 February 2022

Topic: A brief intro to linguistics 2

Reading: Fasold and Connor-Linton (eds.) (2006): Introduction, ch. 1, ch. 2 and ch. 12.

## **HW1 – Submit by Wednesday 11 February 12pm**

### Session 5 – Thursday 10 February 2022

Topic: The arbitrariness of the sign 1

Reading: FdS (1916), excerpts

### \*\*\*Session 6 (Make-Up Day) – Friday 11 February 2022

Topic: The arbitrariness of the sign 2

Reading: FdS (1916), excerpts

### Session 7 – Tuesday 15 February 2022

Topic: Signs: conventionalism and naturalism

Reading: Plato's *Cratylus*, Glymour (2015) part I, ch. 1 up to and inc. p. 23.

### Session 8 – Thursday 17 February 2022

Topic: Linguistic signs get articulated in sentences

Reading: Fasold and Connor-Linton (eds.) (2006): ch. III and ch. IV.

### Session 9 – Tuesday 22 February 2022

Topic: Aristotle's *Peri hermeneias / De interpretatione*

Reading: Aristotle's *De int.* 1-9(35).

### Session 10 – Thursday 24 February 2022

Topic: Aristotle's syllogistics

Reading: Glymour (2015) part I, ch. 2, pp. 33-55.

### Session 11 – Tuesday 1 March 2022

Topic: Quick overview of propositional logic

Reading: Gamut (1991), part I, ch. 2 (excerpts) **and/or** The following videos (very short, around 5-10 min. each) from the "What is logic?" series, by Sara Uckelman - <https://www.youtube.com/user/SaraUckelman> : #45, #47, #49, #50, #51, #52, #53, #54, #63, #90.

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## **\_Session 12 – Thursday 3 March 2022**

\_Topic: Quick overview of first-order logic

Reading: Glymour (2015) part I, ch. 5 **and either** Gamut (1991), part I, ch. 3 (excerpts), **or** the following videos (very short, around 5-10 min. each) from the "What is logic?" series, by Sara Uckelman - <https://www.youtube.com/user/SaraUckelman> : #91 to #116.

## **HW2 – Submit by Saturday 5 March 12pm**

## **\_Session 13 – Tuesday 8 March 2022**

\_Topic: Reasoning as a symbolic mechanism 1

Reading: Locke (1690), book iii (excerpts) and Maat (2011)

## **\_Session 14 – Thursday 10 March 2022**

\_Topic: Reasoning as a symbolic mechanism 2

Locke (1690), book iii, excerpts and Maat (2011)

**[Spring break, so no class on 15 & 17 March 2022]**

## **\_Session 15 – Tuesday 22 March 2022**

\_Topic: Frege on thoughts, aka propositions

Reading: Frege (1918), excerpts

## **\_Session 16 – Thursday 24 March 2022**

\_Topic: Sense and reference: compositionality

Reading: Frege (1892) (excerpts)

## **\_Session 17 – Tuesday 29 March 2022**

\_Topic: Sense and reference: opaque contexts

Reading: Frege (1892) (excerpts)

## **\_Session 18 – Thursday 31 March 2022**

\_Topic: Russellian (in)definite descriptions 1

Reading: Russell (1919) [opt. Russell (1905)]

## **\_Session 19 – Tuesday 5 April 2022**

\_Topic: Russellian (in)definite descriptions 2

Reading: Russell (1919) [opt. Russell (1905)]

## **\_Session 20 – Thursday 7 April 2022**

\_Topic: Russellian (in)definite descriptions 3

Reading: Russell (1919) [opt. Russell (1905)]

## **HW3 – Submit by Saturday 9 April 12pm**

## **\_Session 21 – Tuesday 12 April 2022**

\_Topic: Logical positivism, logical atomism 1

Reading: Wittgenstein (1921) (highlights), Bergmann (1953)

## **\_Session 22 – Thursday 14 April 2022**

\_Topic: Logical positivism, logical atomism 2

Reading: Carnap (1934), Carnap (1950)

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## \_Session 23 – Tuesday 19 April 2022

\_Topic: Quine's take on meaning

Reading: Quine (1992) [opt. Quine (1951)]

## \_Session 24 – Thursday 21 April 2022

\_Topic: Indeterminacy of translation and of reference

Reading: Quine (1992)

## \_Session 25 – Tuesday 26 April 2022

\_Topic: Consequences of indeterminacy

Reading: Quine (1992)

## \_Session 26 – Thursday 28 April 2022

\_Topic: Meaning and action, a new take

Reading: Wittgenstein (1953) §§1-32

## \_Session 27 – Tuesday 3 May 2022

\_Topic: An anti-mentalist argument

Reading: Wittgenstein (1953) §§138-142, §§143-155: §§179-202

## \_Session 28 – Thursday 5 May 2022

\_Topic: An anti-mentalist argument

Reading: Wittgenstein (1953) §§138-142, §§143-155: §§179-202

**[Tuesday 10 May: No class, Reading day]**

**HW4 – Submit by Tuesday 10 May 12pm**

## \_Session 29 – Thursday 12 May 2022

\_Topic: Remarks on the so-called “linguistic turn”

Reading: Rorty (1965), Rorty (1990)

### **Classroom etiquette**

- Class starts at 9h00 sharp. As a sign of respect to all those involved, please arrive in the classroom by 8h55.
  - Students should be respectful and courteous at all times to all participants in class. Make sure to let your classmates finish speaking before you do.
  - No eating in class.
  - Leaving class to go to the bathroom without asking permission or yawning in class is considered rude.
  - Phubbing is completely unacceptable.
  - If you are not using your laptop or tablet to read texts or take notes, laptops must be turned off. Leisurely use of laptops or tablets is unacceptable.
- (Please make you sure to read and acknowledge the information regarding this section on the NYU Paris Resources site on Brightspace.)

### **\_\_\_\_\_Suggested co-curricular activities (some films are available in a Google Drive)**

Watch the following films (all links available on the course website):

- *The secret history of writing* (2020): <https://youtu.be/TyfIS9b77A8>

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- *L'Alphabet de Bruly Bouabré*, by N. Aviv (2004).
- *D'une langue à l'autre*, by N. Aviv (2004).
- *L'enfant sauvage*, by F. Truffaut (1970): <https://vimeo.com/215596192>
- *Traduire*, by N. Aviv (2011).

## Academic policies

### Grade conversion

Your lecturer may use one of the following scales of numerical equivalents to letter grades:

US Letter Grade	US numerical	French numerical	
A	94-100 or 4.0	15-20	Excellent
A-	90-93 or 3.7	14	Very Good
B+	87-89 or 3.3	13	Good
B	84-86 or 2.7	12	Good
B-	80-83 or 2.7	11	Satisfactory
C+	77-79 or 2.3	10	Sufficient
C	74-76 or 2.0	9	Sufficient
C-	70-73 or 1.7	8	Sufficient
D	65-66 or 1.0	5-7	Poor
F	below 65 or 0	1-4	Fail

### Attendance policy

Studying at Global Academic Centers is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes meet twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centers, is expected promptly when class begins. Attendance will be checked at each class meeting. If you have scheduled a remote course immediately preceding/following an in-person class, you may want to write to [nyu.paris.academics@nyu.edu](mailto:nyu.paris.academics@nyu.edu) to see if you can take your remote class at the Academic Center.

As soon as it becomes clear that you cannot attend a class, you must inform your professor and/or the Academics team by e-mail immediately (i.e. before the start of your class). Absences are only excused if they are due to illness, Moses Center accommodations,

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religious observance or emergencies. Your professor or site staff may ask you to present a doctor's note or an exceptional permission from an NYU Staff member as proof. Emergencies or other exceptional circumstances that you wish to be treated confidentially must be presented to staff. Doctor's notes must be submitted in person or by e-mail to the Academics team, who will inform your professors.

Unexcused absences may be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade for every week's worth of classes missed, and will negatively affect your class participation grade. Four unexcused absences in one course may lead to a Fail in that course. Being late counts as an unexcused absence. Your professor is entitled to deduct points if you frequently join the class late.

Exams, tests and quizzes, deadlines, and oral presentations that are missed due to illness always require a doctor's note as documentation. It is the student's responsibility to produce this doctor's note and submit it to site staff; until this doctor's note is produced the missed assessment is graded with an F and no make-up assessment is scheduled. In content classes, an F in one assignment may lead to failure of the entire class.

Regardless of whether an absence is excused or not, it is the student's responsibility to catch up with the work that was missed.

## **Late submission of work**

- (1) Work submitted late receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100 point scale for each day it is late (including weekends and public holidays), unless an extension has been approved (with a doctor's note or by approval of NYU site Staff), in which case the 2 points per day deductions start counting from the day the extended deadline has passed.
- (2) Without an approved extension, written work submitted more than 5 days (including weekends and public holidays) following the submission date receives an F.
- (3) Assignments due during finals week that are submitted more than 3 days late (including weekends and public holidays) without previously arranged extensions will not be accepted and will receive a zero. Any exceptions or extensions for work during finals week must be approved by Academic Affairs ([nyu.paris.academics@nyu.edu](mailto:nyu.paris.academics@nyu.edu)).
- (4) Please remember that university computers do not keep your essays - you must save them elsewhere. Having lost parts of your essay on the university computer is no excuse for a late submission.

## **Academic honesty/plagiarism**

As the University's policy on "[Academic Integrity for Students at NYU](#)" states: "At NYU, a commitment to excellence, fairness, honesty, and respect within and outside the classroom is essential to maintaining the integrity of our community. By accepting membership in this community, students take responsibility for demonstrating these values in their own conduct and for recognizing and supporting these values in others." Students at Global Academic Centers must follow the University and school policies.

NYU takes plagiarism very seriously; penalties follow and may exceed those set out by your home school. Your lecturer may ask you to sign a declaration of authorship form, and may check your assignments by using TurnItIn or another software designed to detect offences against academic integrity.

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The presentation of another person's words, ideas, judgment, images, or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism. It is also an offense to submit work for assignments from two different courses that is substantially the same (be it oral presentations or written work). If there is an overlap of the subject of your assignment with one that you produced for another course (either in the current or any previous semester), you **MUST** inform your professor.

For guidelines on academic honesty, clarification of the definition of plagiarism, examples of procedures and sanctions, and resources to support proper citation, please see:

[NYU Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines](#)

[NYU Library Guides](#)

## **Inclusivity policies and priorities**

NYU's Office of Global Programs and NYU's global sites are committed to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In order to nurture a more inclusive global university, NYU affirms the value of sharing differing perspectives and encourages open dialogue through a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our goal is to make all students feel included and welcome in all aspects of academic life, including our syllabi, classrooms, and educational activities/spaces.

### **Attendance rules on religious holidays**

Members of any religious group may, without penalty, excuse themselves from classes when required in compliance with their religious obligations. Students who anticipate being absent due to religious observance should notify their lecturer AND NYU SITE's Academics Office in writing via e-mail one week in advance. If examinations or assignment deadlines are scheduled on the day the student will be absent, the Academics Office will schedule a make-up examination or extend the deadline for assignments. Please note that an absence is only excused for the holiday but not for any days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. See also [University Calendar Policy on Religious Holidays](#)

### **Pronouns and name pronunciation (Albert and Zoom)**

Students, staff, and faculty have the opportunity to add their pronouns, as well as the pronunciation of their names, into Albert. Students can have this information displayed to faculty, advisors, and administrators in Albert, Brightspace, the NYU Home internal directory, as well as other NYU systems. Students can also opt out of having their pronouns viewed by their instructors, in case they feel more comfortable sharing their pronouns outside of the classroom. For more information on how to change this information for your Albert account, please see the [Pronouns and Name Pronunciation website](#).

Students, staff, and faculty are also encouraged, though not required, to list their pronouns, and update their names in the name display for Zoom. For more information on how to make this change, please see the [Personalizing Zoom Display Names website](#).

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## **Moses accommodations statement**

Academic accommodations are available for students with documented and registered disabilities. Please contact the Moses Center for Student Accessibility (+1 212-998-4980 or [mosescsd@nyu.edu](mailto:mosescsd@nyu.edu)) for further information. Students who are requesting academic accommodations are advised to reach out to the Moses Center as early as possible in the semester for assistance. Accommodations for this course are managed through NYU Paris.

## **Bias response**

The New York University Bias Response Line provides a mechanism through which members of our community can share or report experiences and concerns of bias, discrimination, or harassing behavior that may occur within our community.

Experienced administrators in the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) receive and assess reports, and then help facilitate responses, which may include referral to another University school or unit, or investigation if warranted according to the University's existing Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy.

The Bias Response Line is designed to enable the University to provide an open forum that helps to ensure that our community is equitable and inclusive.

To report an incident, please contact one of the following:

- Online using the [Web Form \(link\)](#)
- Email: [bias.response@nyu.edu](mailto:bias.response@nyu.edu)
- Phone (NY): +1 (212) 998-2277
- Office of the Director, NYU Paris: +33 1 53 92 50 80

## **About your instructor**

I am a Global Lecturer at NYU Paris. I am interested in the normative constraints at the basis of linguistic expression, and in the epistemology of disciplines concerned with natural language.