Philosophy of Language – Spring 2018

Class code
PHIL-UA 85

Instructor Details
Inés Crespo
inescrespo@gmail.com
http://inescrespo.altervista.org/nyu.html
+33 7 82 53 67 38
Office hours on XX from YYh till ZZh in room #N. Meeting outside office hours is possible, students are always welcome to contact me to set up an appointment.

Class Details
Philosophy of Language (PHIL-UA 85).
Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9h00 till 10h30, room #N.

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

Class 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. The course is envisaged to cover the following topics:

- Introduction: sketch of a landscape of disciplines concerned with language, a very rudimentary toolkit in propositional and first-order logic (Week 1)
- Linguistics as a science. (Weeks 2-3)
- Sense and reference, for and against. Descriptivist theories of reference. (Weeks 3-6)
- Sense and reference, for and against. Non-descriptivist theories of reference. (Weeks 6-7)
- Meaning and action. Indeterminacy of translation. (Week 8-9)
- Meaning and action. Rule-following and knowledge of language. (Weeks 10-11)
- Conversation as rational behaviour. Performatives and implicatures. (Weeks 12-13)

Desired Outcomes
The course will allow students to:

- Understand different theories in philosophy of language concerning, i.a., conventionalism, meaning, reference, naming, describing, translation, rule-following, and communicative action.
- 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:

- understanding philosophical texts,
- assessing and producing philosophical arguments,
- formulating a research question, a hypothesis, and a methodology in a research project,
- executing a research project in a long essay.

Assessment Components
Students are expected to read in advance so that they can meaningfully participate in the discussions in class. If it is apparent that a student hasn’t read the required materials for a session, the student will be asked to leave the class and go to read in the library.

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

- 70% homework assignments,
- 30% final paper.

Failure to submit homework assignments or the final paper, or to fulfill any other required course component (persistent failure to complete the required readings, persistent failure to participate in class) results in failure of the class.

Homework assignments should be submitted by email as a PDF by the deadline indicated in the syllabus.

- HW#1. Study questions on Saussure (1916). Answers should be given in well-constructed paragraphs of 300-500 words each (not inc. ref. and fn.)
- HW#2. Frege (1892) and Russell (1905) are challenging philosophical pieces. Russell (1905) is, quite explicitly, a reaction against the Fregean distinction between sense and reference. The study questions in this guide should help you write a short essay of 800-1000 words (not inc. ref. and fn.) in which you delve into their discussion. Your essay should present the main tenets of their respective views, motivate them by making explicit the way Russell’s theory is a critical reaction on Frege’s, and discuss them by assessing the virtues or flaws of their views, or by pointing out aspects of their views that you do not understand, and why.
• HW#3. The argument for semantic externalism based on the Twin-Earth thought experiment in Putnam (1975) is subtle. To reconstruct it, one should refer back to Frege (1892). The argument for the indeterminacy of translation in Quine (1960) is a difficult one, and the position on which it is held could be said to be another form of semantic externalism. The instructions in this guide should help you write a short essay of 1000-1500 words (not inc. ref. and fn.) in which you reconstruct the arguments in each of these pieces, and where you discuss the extent to which Quine’s viewpoint comes close to Putnam's externalism.

• HW#4. Submit a research project for the final paper of up to 1000 words, in which you will set up the research plan for the final essay for the course. Bear in mind that the final paper will be 2500-3000 words long. In the project, you will:
  1. formulate a research question related to one of the topics seen in the course, or to some point of contact between two topics;
  2. provide arguments that motivate the initial question;
  3. narrow down this initial question and motivate the choices you make in order to sharpen it;
  4. formulate an adequate hypothesis;
  5. elaborate a sketch of a methodology by which you can establish the hypothesis;
  6. assess how you will deal with the possible scenario in which you do not succeed in establishing it;
  7. provide annotated bibliographic references for three sources you will rely on in your research.

A special requirement for this assignment is that you come at least once to office hours with a (partial) draft of your project. Make an appointment with me by 4 Apr. The date of the appointment can be any time between 4-25 Apr.

Final paper:
Long argumentative essay of 2500-3000 words (not inc. ref. and fn.) The essay's structure will be fixed in the instructions for the final essay.

### Assessment Expectations

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>excellent work</td>
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<td>A‐</td>
<td>good work</td>
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<td>B+</td>
<td>satisfactory work</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>passable work (lowest passing grade)</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>failure</td>
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### Grade conversion

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### Grading Policy
NYU Paris aims to have grading standards and results in all its courses similar to those that prevail at Washington Square.

### Attendance Policy
Study abroad 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 typically meet once or 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 mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students' semester grades. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

As per the Global Academic standard, unexcused absences will be penalized with a two percent deduction from the student's final course grade.

Other guidelines specific to NYU Paris include:

- Attendance to class and all course-related events, even outside of regularly scheduled course times, is expected and mandatory. Some class outings/make-up classes take place on Fridays.
- Under no circumstances will non-University-related travel constitute an excused absence from class. DO NOT book travel until you have received and carefully studied the syllabus of each of your classes.

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1 NYU’s “Policies and procedures for students studying away at a Global Academic Center”
• If you are not sick enough to go to the doctor, you are well enough to go to class. Doctor’s notes will be expected for all medical-related absences.

• No tests, quizzes, or exams will be made up. A missed test, quiz, or exam will result in a zero. Questions about this policy should be directed to the Academic Affairs team, not your professor.

Extensions will not be allowed (not for homework sets, not for the final essay). Students undergoing genuine medical or mitigating personal circumstances due to which submission by the due deadline becomes a problem should (a) contact me by email before the deadline, (b) be ready to provide written evidence proving the mitigating circumstances.

Late submissions will be penalised 1 point every 2h after the deadline.

Late Submission of Work

Plagiarism Policy

New York University in Paris, as an academic community, is committed to free and open inquiry, to creating an intellectual and social environment that promotes this, and to upholding the highest standards of personal and academic integrity.

All NYU Paris students have the responsibility to uphold these stated objectives. As a member of this community, you accept the responsibility for upholding and maintaining these standards, which include refraining from all forms of plagiarism and cheating as detailed below.

Cases of plagiarism at NYU Paris will be brought to the attention of NYU Paris academic administration as well as the implicated student’s home school Dean.

PLAGIARISM: a form of fraud, presenting someone else’s work as though it were your own

• A sequence of words from another writer who you have not quoted and referenced in footnotes

• A paraphrased passage from another writer’s work that you have not cited.

• Facts or ideas gathered and reported by someone else

• Another student’s work that you claim as your own

• A paper that is purchased or “researched” for money

• A paper that is downloaded free of charge from the Internet

CHEATING

• Copying from another student’s exam or quiz

• Giving or receiving unauthorized assistance (crib sheets, internet, etc.) during an exam or quiz

• Having someone take your exam

• Accessing an exam or quiz in an unauthorized fashion prior to its administration

• Collaborating with other students or unauthorized persons on a take home exam

• Using the same written material for two courses without the express permission of both instructors

• Fabricating or falsifying data

Required Text(s)

There will be a course reader made available as a PDF file on the course website. For certain texts, only selected passages will be selected.

Supplemental Texts (not required to purchase as copies are in NYU-L Library)

None.

Internet Research Guidelines

Plagiarism policy applies to materials found on the internet just as they apply to published text. Students are expected to judge critically the quality of the materials they find on the internet. Failure to do so will score negatively on the student’s skills.

None.

2 NYU’s Expository Writing Department’s Statement on Plagiarism
3 NYU Statement on Plagiarism
4 NYU Statement on Plagiarism
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<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Session 1: Tue, 30 Jan</th>
<th>Topic: Introduction and course formalities</th>
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<td></td>
<td>Session 2: Thu, 1 Feb</td>
<td>Topic: A very rudimentary logical toolkit</td>
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| Week 2 | Session 3: Tue, 6 Feb | Topic: Linguistics as a science 1  
Reading: Saussure (1916) (excerpts) up to the end of ch.3 in the Intro. |
|        | Session 4: Thu, 8 Feb | Topic: Linguistics as a science 2  
Reading: Saussure (1916) (excerpts) up to the end ch.2 in General P. |
| Week 3 | Session 5: Tue, 13 Feb | Topic: Linguistics as a science 3  
Reading: Saussure (1916) |
|        | Submission: Wed, 14 Feb | HW#1, by 12h00 |
|        | Session 6: Thu, 15 Feb | Topic: Frege's Platonist theory of meaning 1  
Reading: Frege (1892) up to p. 41. |
|        | Session 7: Fri, 16 Feb | Topic: Frege's Platonist theory of meaning 2  
Reading: Frege (1892) up to X |
| Week 4 | Session 8: Tue, 20 Feb | Topic: Frege's Platonist theory of meaning 3  
Reading: Frege (1892) up to X |
|        | Session 9: Thu, 22 Feb | Topic: Frege's Platonist theory of meaning 4  
Reading: Frege (1892) up to X |
| Week 5 | Session 10: Tue, 27 Feb | Topic: Russell's theory of descriptions 1  
Reading: Russell (1905) up to p. 482, line 25. |
|        | Session 11: Thu, 1 Mar | Topic: Russell's theory of descriptions 2  
Reading: Russell (1905) up to p. 491, line 2. |
|        | Session 12: Fri, 2 Mar | Topic: Russell's theory of descriptions 3  
Reading: Russell (1905) up to p. 491, line 2. |
| Week 6 | Submission: Wed, 7 Mar | HW#2, by 12h00 |
|        | Session 13: Tue, 6 Mar | Topic: Russell's theory of descriptions 4  
Reading: Russell (1905) |
|        | Session 14: Thu, 8 Mar | Topic: Putnam's semantic externalism 1  
Reading: Putnam (1975) (excerpts) up to the end of the section “Psychological state” and methodological solipsism, p. 139. |
| Week 7 | Session 15: Tue, 13 Mar | Topic: Putnam's semantic externalism 2  
Reading: Putnam (1975) up to the end of the section “Meaning”, p.166 |
|        | Session 16: Thu, 15 Mar | Topic: Putnam's semantic externalism 3  
Reading: Putnam (1975) (excerpts) up to the end |
| Week 8 | Session 17: Tue, 20 Mar | Topic: Quine's indeterminacy of translation 1  
Reading: Quine (1960) (excerpts), sections §7 to §9. |
|        | Session 18: Thu, 22 Mar | Topic: Quine's indeterminacy of translation 2  
Reading: Quine (1960) (excerpts), sections §10 to §13. |
| Week 9 | Session 19: Tue, 27 Mar | Topic: Quine's indeterminacy of translation 3  
Reading: Quine (1960) (excerpts), sections §14 to §16. |
|        | Session 20: Thu, 29 Mar | Topic: Quine's indeterminacy of translation 4  
Reading: Quine (1960) (excerpts) |
|        | Submission: Fri, 30 Mar | HW#3, by 12h00 |
| Week 10 | Session 21: Tue, 3 Apr | Topic: Rule-following 1  
|        | Session 22: Thu, 5 Apr | Rule-following 2  
| Week 11 | Session 23: Tue, 10 Apr | Topic: Rule-following 3  
|        | Session 24: Thu, 12 Apr | Topic: Rule-following 4  
|        | Spring break: 14 Apr – 22 Apr | |
| Week 12 | Session 25: Tue, 24 Apr | Topic: Austin and the performative function of language 1  
Reading: Austin (1961) part I. |
|        | Session 26: Thu, 26 Apr | Topic: Austin and the performative function of language 2  
Reading: Austin (1961) part II. |
|        | Submission: Thu, 26 Apr | HW#4, by 15h00 |
|        | Session 27: Fri, 27 Apr  
(afternoon, time slot TBC) | Topic: Grice's rational approach to conversation 1  
Reading: Grice (1975) up to X |
### Week 13

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<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Thu, 3 May</td>
<td>Grice’s rational approach to conversation 2</td>
<td>Grice (1975) up to X</td>
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### Week 14

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<td>29</td>
<td>Tue, 15 May</td>
<td>Grice’s rational approach to conversation 3</td>
<td>Grice (1975) up to X</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Thu, 17 May</td>
<td>Closing discussion</td>
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### Submission

- Thu, 17 May
- Final essay, by 9h00

### References

(In order of appearance in the reader.)


### Classroom Etiquette

- No eating in class.
- No cell phones in class. Phubbing is completely unacceptable.
- Laptop computers are admitted in class but only to read texts or take notes. Leisurly use is not admitted.
- Students will be asked to shut down their laptop immediately if it is apparent that they do not make proper use of it.
- Leaving class to go to the bathroom without asking permission or yawning in class is considered rude in France.

### Required Co-curricular Activities

None.

### Suggested Co-curricular Activities

Students are encouraged to attend seminars held at different research institutes & departments in Paris. See the programs, for instance, of:

- Parcours philosophique de l’Institut Jean-Nicod (many courses are taught in English): [http://www.institutnicod.org/etudier-a-l-ijn/parcours-philosophique/](http://www.institutnicod.org/etudier-a-l-ijn/parcours-philosophique/)
- Other seminars at the Institut Jean-Nicod: [http://www.institutnicod.org/seminaires-colloques/](http://www.institutnicod.org/seminaires-colloques/)
  - The Wittgenstein seminar at Paris 1: [http://execo.hypotheses.org/3709](http://execo.hypotheses.org/3709)
  - Different seminars at IHPST: [http://www.ihpst.cnrs.fr/en](http://www.ihpst.cnrs.fr/en)

### Your Instructor

I am an associate post-doc at the Institut Jean-Nicod (CNRS-ENS-EHESS), and a global lecturer at NYU Paris. I am interested in the normative constraints on the linguistic behaviour of (human) agents, and in the epistemology of disciplines that are concerned with natural language.