

Phil of Language

PHI 4220 Fall 2025

Prof. Ray

PHI 4220 - Syllabus

Philosophy of language examines the phenomenon of language and seeks to understand it in its relations to the world and to human thought and communication. Beginning with the most basic idea about language—that words are signs for things—and through study of a series of classic philosophical essays, this course will follow a major thread of the philosophical discourse focused on the semantics of language—reference, truth and meaning. Possible additional topics include: fictional discourse, vagueness, metaphor.

From this course — through lecture, discussion and the examination of philosophical texts — you will learn about central philosophic ideas about language, and will have considered and discussed many of the problems which animate this area of philosophical discourse. This is, in part, a student-driven course, so you will also be asked to explore the philosophical literature and confront the reasons and arguments offered in this domain, and to adjudicate between them with reasons of your own. The content and direction of the course will be partly determined by the results of these endeavors throughout the class. This course will help you develop and exercise many skills that are a goal of the major; in terms of learning outcomes

(<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/liberalarts/alc/philosophy.aspx>), see especially SLOs 4,5,6 & 7.

Course Work:

The work of this course consists in the careful reading and analysis of difficult philosophical texts, attendance and participation, some short quizzes and/or reports, two exams, and a medium-length term paper (see proviso below). Weighting: 10% participation, 20% quizzes/assignments, 50% exams, 15% paper, 5% foobar. Proviso: Students whose overall percentage in the course is less than 85% prior to the term paper will be judged not to have acquired an adequate basis for writing a paper. They will not be allowed to write a paper and their pre-paper course percentage will substitute for their paper score. Students whose pre-paper percentage is 85% or better will have the choice of writing the term paper or having their pre-paper course percentage *capped at 85%* substitute for their paper score. *Nota bene:* Students who do not write a paper cannot make a superlative grade in the class.

Written work will be handed in using the eLearning (Canvas) site for this course.

Course Materials:

All course materials will be made available either via Canvas or companion web site (if applicable). Some course materials may be posted as password protected pdf. In order to open them you need to know a password — which will be given to you in class...

This course does not require a textbook.

Rules of Engagement:

1) The materials on the Canvas site or companion site (as applicable) do not belong to you. You may not give access to or share them with anyone outside the class. 2) The use of recording devices in the classroom is circumscribed by law (<https://aa.ufl.edu/policies/in-class-recording/>), and permitted under three particular auspices. Students may not share, transmit, circulate, distribute to any person any such recording, nor upload such to any media platform. 3) The use in class of any digital device for any unsanctioned or non-class-related purpose (e.g. messaging, surfing, social media, searching the internet for info) is strictly prohibited. All digital devices are unsanctioned by default. Thank you.

Nota bene:

Students who do not get assignments in on time are subject to the Devilish Lateness Policy™

The use of AI assistance (e.g. ChatGPT) for the production of any work for (or engagement in) this class is generally contrary to the central pedagogical aims of the course. All uses of such AI assistance are unauthorized, unless expressly permitted by the instructor. Violations of this policy will be treated as with any other academic honesty violation.

Plagiarism or other academic honesty violations are not tolerated and will result in i) immediate failure in the course and ii) referral to the Dean of Students for further action. Plagiarism is the presentation of words or ideas that are not your own as if they were your own. *Nota bene:* the use of any (unquoted, unacknowledged) AI-generated text is plagiarism, pure and simple. [Worse, as a general rule, the textual output of LLMs is all patchwork plagiarism to begin with.] All assignments are to be completed on your own. It is your responsibility to know and understand the UF Student Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/judicial/honorcode.php>).

Note for Students with Disabilities:

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF General Policy:

Compliance:

This course complies with UF academic policies (<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>). The foregoing link will direct you to these official University policies.

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations (<https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>). Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. UF emails students with specific times when they are open. Summary results (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>) of these assessments are made available to students. UF has specific guidance (<https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>) on how to give professional (and respectful) feedback.

Conformality:

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with prevailing university policy (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>).

Grade Points:

Information on how UF calculates grade points from grades can be found here (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>).

Minimum Requirement:

Please note that a minimum course grade of C is required to get general education credit for taking it (if this course is a listed Gen Ed class).

Useful Disclaimer:

Our schedule of topics/readings/assignments are subject to change. So, stay informed as we go along.

Personnel & Contact

- Prof. Greg Ray, 300 FLO
Class Professor
gregray.ufl.edu #352-392-2084

Office Hours

- TBA
- And GR by appt

Topical Schedule:

- 08/21- Introduction.
- • Semantics
- 08/26- Linguistic Meaning.
- 09/02- Indeterminacy.
- 09/09- Reference.
- 09/16- Davidsonian Programme.
- 09/23- (cont).
- 09/30- Understanding Language.
- 10/07- TBA.
- 10/14- 1st Exam.
- • Topics
- 10/21- Pragmatics.
- 10/28- Metaphor.
- 11/04- Language & Thought.
- • Final Projects
- 11/13- Final Projects.
- 12/02- 2nd Exam.
- 12/09- Term Papers Due.

Section Meetings:

- 26487--Tue 3:00-4:55 [GR] MAT 0113
- 26487--Thu 4:05-4:55 [GR] MAT 0113