

B.A. Seminar: Insults, Lies, and Bullshit Summer Term 2017

Instructor: Mark Bowker

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Office: Ludwigstrae 31, Room 125

Office hours: By email appointment.

Classes: Tuesdays 14:15-15.45. Total of 14 weeks (25/04/2017 - 25/07/2017).

Seminar Room: Ludwigstrae 31, Room 028

Overview: This course introduces students to key themes in contemporary philosophy of language through distinctively linguistic issues that arise from ethical discourse. We will consider ethically significant speech acts like lying, silencing, and bullshitting; ethically significant words and phrases, like slurs and generalisations; and the language of ethics itself, including terms like ‘right’, ‘wrong,’ and ‘murder’.

Course Expectations: Required readings should be completed in advance of each class. The readings will be posted to LSF. A good grade in this class cannot be achieved by completing only the required readings. I will present further readings in the lectures, but you should also carry out your own research. Additional readings can be found by looking up the references mentioned in the primary readings, by looking up the references mentioned in encyclopaedia entries (the Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy is a particularly good online resource, though the quality of the entries varies), by entering keywords in Google Scholar, or by using Google Scholar to find papers which cite something you have already read.

You should also be writing throughout the course. At a minimum, you should attempt to write a paraphrase of the required readings and lectures. You should do that weekly, while the material is fresh.

Course Forum: A forum is available for students to discuss the course material with each other. All students are encouraged to contribute by creating and responding to threads throughout the week. Discussions can involve issues from past weeks and the coming week.

Assessment: Assessment will be by one essay, submitted to me by email before 22nd September 2017. Submissions should be 22,500-27,500 characters (not including spaces), double-spaced, in 12-point font, with margins of 1.5 inches. All students should confer with me in order to formulate an appropriate question.

Provisional Schedule:

Part I: Speech Acts

Week 1, 25/04/2017: Introduction

Required reading: No reading

Week 2, 02/05/2017: *Insinuating*

Required reading: Grice, H.P. 1989. *Studies in the Way of Words*, Chapters 2 and 3. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Week 3, 09/05/2017: *Lying*

Required reading: Austin, J.L. 1961. Performative Utterances. In *Philosophical Papers*, J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (eds), Chapter 10. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Week 4, 16/05/2017: *Bullshitting*

Required reading: Frankfurt, H. 2005. *On Bullshit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Week 5, 23/05/2017: *Silencing*

Required reading: Langton, R. 1993. Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts. *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, 22/4: 293-330

Week 6, 30/05/2017: *Consent*

Required reading: Kleinig, J. 1982. The Ethics of Consent. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Supplementary Volume 8: 91-118.

Part II: Meaning and Content

Week 7, 06/05/2017: NO TEACHING

Week 8, 13/06/2017: *The Language of Ethics*

Required reading: Ayer, A. J. 1936. Critique of Ethics and Theology. *Language, Truth and Logic*, Chapter 6. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd.

Week 9, 20/06/2017: *Profanity*

Required reading: Hom, C. 2010. Pergoratives. *Philosophy Compass*, 5/2: 164-185.

Week 10, 27/06/2017: *Gender and race*

Required reading: Haslanger, S. 2000. Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be? *Noûs*, 34/1: 31-55.

Week 11, 04/07/2017: *Generics*

Required reading: Leslie, S. J. 2008. Generics: Cognition and Acquisition. *Philosophical Review* 117/1: 1-47.

Part III: Linguistic Norms

Week 12, 11/07/2017: *Linguistic prescriptivism*

Required reading: Pullum, G. Ideology, Power, and Linguistic Theory.

[https://people.ucsc.edu/~sim\\$pullum/MLA2004.pdf](https://people.ucsc.edu/~sim$pullum/MLA2004.pdf)

Week 13, 18/07/2017: *The norms of assertion*

Required reading: Weiner, M. 2007. Norms of Assertion. *Philosophy Compass*, 2/2: 187-195.

Week 14, 25/07/2017: Review Session.