

Philosophy 1890d: Theories of Truth

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Structure and Requirements

Course Structure

The course will meet Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 1pm, in Rockefeller Library, Room A9. Typically, there will be lectures each day, but some days (usually Fridays) will be devoted to discussion. On such days, students should arrive appropriately prepared with questions, comments, or criticisms. Otherwise, it will be very quiet.

Prerequisites

We are going to be reading advanced, difficult material (some of it legendarily difficult). This is not a course for beginners.

We shall also be reading and discussing a good deal of formal (mathematical) work on truth. Phil 0540, or something equivalent, is an essential prerequisite. Even more of a prerequisite, however, is that students should be comfortable with mathematical argumentation, that is, with proofs. If you have doubts about your preparation in this respect, please speak to the instructor before deciding to take the course for credit.

Requirements

- Reading Responses: 20%
For each assigned reading, students are required to submit, to the courses's Canvas site, a response to that reading no later than 10am the day we will be discussing it. I encourage all of us to read and, if we wish, comment upon, the submissions of the others. The response does *not* have to address the associated questions on the syllabus; those are intended merely to provide some kind of initial guidance.
The responses will be graded mostly on a "did" or "didn't" scale, but officially on a scale from 0-5 points. The main criterion here is the amount of thought that emerges in the response.
- Short Papers: 20%
There will be two short papers of about 3-5 pages, with a *maximum* length of

1500 words. Lists of 'topics' will be distributed on 8 February and 19 April; the papers will be due on 15 February and 26 April. The 'topics' will be short quotations from various of the papers we read, and the object of the exercise will be expository: You will be asked to explain the passage and its significance.

- **Problem Sets: 20%**
There will be two sets of problems related to the formal material we will study. These are due on 8 March and 5 April.
- **Term Paper: 40%**
The final requirement for the course is a shortish term paper, which will be due on the day of the final exam, 9 May. The paper should be a *maximum* of 4500 words (roughly 15 pages), but can be as short as 3000 words (roughly 9 pages), and should in the style of a submission to the journal *Thought*, of which I am one of the Associate Editors. Articles published in *Thought* are brief, direct discussions of tightly specified issues. The topic of the paper is up to the student but *must* relate directly to at least two of the papers we have read. It also must be cleared with the instructor no later than 29 April. Students are *encouraged* to work together, if they wish, on this assignment. That is, joint papers are acceptable. But no more than two authors on a given paper, please, unless we have a problem with numbers.

Warning: I do not accept late work, under any circumstances. On the other hand, I am extremely flexible about due dates. That is to say: If someone should need an extra day or two, she need only ask; no reason need be given. If someone should need more time than that, then some reason does need to be given, but the request will usually be granted. Since I am so flexible, there can be no excuse for one's not asking for an extension. It's really just a matter of respect.

Syllabus

23 January Introductory Meeting

The Role of the Concept of Truth

25 and 28 January J.L. Austin, "Truth" and P.F. Strawson, "Truth", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 51 (1950-51), pp. 111-56.

30 January A.J. Ayer, "Truth", *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 25 (1953), pp. 183-200.

1 February Discussion

4 February Alfred Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth and the Foundations of Semantics", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 4 (1944), pp. 341-76. You need only read pp. 341-355, that is, the first part of the paper.

6 February Michael Dummett, “Truth”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59 (1958-59), pp. 141-62.

8 February Discussion

Tarski’s Theory of Truth

11, 13, 15 February Handout: Formal Background for Theories of Truth

18 February No class: Presidents’ Day Break

20, 22, 25, 27 February Handout: Tarski’s Theory of Truth

1 March No Class: Instructor lecturing at UC-Davis

4 March Hartry Field, “Tarski’s Theory of Truth”, *Journal of Philosophy* (1972), pp. 347-75.

6 March John Etchemendy, “Tarski on Truth and Logical Consequence”, *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 53 (1988), pp. 57-79. You need not read section 2 (which is on logical consequence, not on truth).

8 March Richard Heck, “Tarski, Truth, and Semantics”, *Philosophical Review* 106 (1997), pp. 533-54.

Kripke’s Theory of Truth

11 and 13 March Saul Kripke, “An Outline of a Theory of Truth”, *Journal of Philosophy* (1975), pp. 690-716, esp. pp. 690-702.

15 March Discussion

18, 20, and 22 March Handout: Kripke’s Theory of Truth

25, 27, 29 March No class: Spring Break

Deflationism

1 and 3 April Hartry Field, “Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content”, *Mind* 103 (1994), pp. 249-85.

5 April Discussion

8 April Anil Gupta, “A Critique of Deflationism,” *Philosophical Topics* 21 (1993), pp. 57-81.

10 April Richard Heck, “Truth and Disquotatation”, *Synthese* 142 (2004), pp. 317-52.

12 April Discussion

Semantic Primitivism

- 15 April** David Wiggins, “What Would Be a Substantial Theory of Truth?”, in Z. van Straaten, ed., *Philosophical Subjects* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), pp. 189-221
- 17 April** Michael Dummett, “The Source of the Concept of Truth”, in *The Seas of Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996)
- 19 April** No Class: Instructor lecturing at Toronto
- 22 April** Discussion
- 24 April** Dorit Bar-On and Keith Simmons, “The Use of Force Against Deflationism: Assertion and Truth”, in D. Greimann & G. Siegart, eds. *Truth and Speech Acts: Studies in the Philosophy of Language* (New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 61-89.
- 26 April** Mark Textor, “Frege on Judging as Acknowledging the Truth”, *Mind* 119 (2010), pp. 615-55
- 29 April** Discussion