philosophy of language

University of Edinburgh :: PHIL10005
Brian Rabern
DSB 4.04c
brian.rabern[@]ed.ac.uk

Office hours: Tuesdays 11-12
Course secretary: Sam Bell (sam.bell@ed.ac.uk)

Course description: This course is an introduction to some central themes in the philosophy of language—with a primarily focus on the relationship between meaning, reference, and content. We will study a range of classical and contemporary theories about the semantics of referring expressions such as proper names and indexicals. Throughout we will explore some of the connected philosophical questions–issues related to, e.g., modality, apriority, belief, self-locating thought, and subjectivity.

Main texts:
• Kripke, Naming and necessity
• Kaplan, Demonstratives

Weekly schedule:
1. An ancient dispute
   • Plato, Cratylus
   • Williams, Cratylus’ theory of names and its refutation
2. Sense and reference
   • Mill, ‘Of names’
   • Frege, ‘Sense and reference’
3. Kripke on names
   • Kripke, Naming and necessity [excerpt]
4. Kripke on modality
   • Quine, Reference and modality
   • Kripke, Naming and necessity [excerpt]
5. Naming and belief
   • Kripke, ‘A puzzle about belief’
6. Sense and indexicals
   • Frege, ‘The Thought’
   • Kaplan, ‘Demonstratives’ [excerpt]
7. Character and content
   • Kaplan, ‘Demonstratives’ [excerpt]
8. Essential indexicality
   • Perry, ‘The problem of the essential indexical’
   • Lewis, ‘Attitudes de dicto and de se’
9. Two-dimensionalism
   • Evans, ‘Reference and contingency’
   • Chalmers, ‘On sense and intension’
10. Subjectivity and relativism
    • Prior, ‘Egocentric logic’
    • Lasersohn, ‘Context Dependence, Disagreement, and Predicates of Personal Taste’
11. Tense and future contingents
    • MacFarlane, ‘Future Contingents and Relative Truth’

Assessment:
- Weekly question 10 x 300 words (40%)
- End-of-semester essay of 2,500 words (60%)