

Mind, Matter, and Language

21/22

Semester 1

This course is an introduction to philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. Its aim is to introduce you to some of the central problems, topics, and concepts in these areas, and to develop your skills in critical thinking, understanding and analysing written texts, and clear writing.

Course Organiser:

Dr. Dave Ward

Dave.Ward@ed.ac.uk

Course Secretary:

Ms. Vera Spiliotakou

philinfo@ed.ac.uk

Lecture Topics and Readings

The topics and required readings for the course are listed below. All readings are available via the course's library resource list, [here](#), and will be linked to on the Learn page for each week of the course. Many of these readings are quite tricky – don't be alarmed if you find them difficult on your first (or second, or third) reading. They *are* difficult!

The lectures are intended to help you understand and think about some of the key arguments from the readings, as well as why they have been important or influential. It is up to you how to plan your reading and make use of the resources on this course. But my recommendation is to read through each week's core reading before watching the lectures, then (at least!) once more after watching the lectures.

Week	Topic	Core Reading
Week 1	Words and their meanings (Schwarz)	Paul Grice, "Meaning" (1957) Gottlob Frege, "Function and Concept" (1891)
Week 2	Frege on sense and reference (Schwarz)	Gottlob Frege, "On Sense and Reference" (1892)
Week 3	Russell on descriptions (Schwarz)	Bertrand Russell, "On Denoting" (1905)
Week 4	Semantic externalism (Schwarz)	Saul Kripke, Lecture 1 of <i>Naming and Necessity</i> (1980)

Week	Topic	Core Reading
		Sally Haslanger, "What Good are Our Intuitions?" (2006)
Week 5	Doing things with words (Schwarz)	Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> (1953), §1-38 Mary Kate McGowan, "Oppressive Speech" (2009)
Week 6	Minds as computers (Ward)	Alan Turing, "Computing Machinery and Intelligence" (1950)
Week 7	Functionalism about minds (Ward)	Ned Block, "Troubles with Functionalism" (1980)
Week 8	Puzzles about representation (Ward)	Kathleen Akins, "Of Sensory Systems and the Aboutness of Mental States" (1996)
Week 9	Cognition, consciousness and biology (Ward)	Pamela Lyon, "The Biogenic Approach to Cognition" (2006) Peter Godfrey-Smith, "Mind, Matter and Metabolism" (2016)
Week 10	Problems with AI (Ward)	Emily Bender, Timnit Gebru, Angelina McMillan-Mayer and Schmargaret Schmitz: "On the Dangers of Stochastic Parrots: Can Language Models be Too Big?" (2021)
Week 11	Review Week	

Schedule of Lecture Availability

Due to Covid-related social distancing considerations, the lectures for this course will be provided to you as online recordings, available via Learn. These recordings will be accompanied by files containing the lecture slides or other materials. Starting Monday September 20, the lectures for each week will be released on Mondays at 0900.

Further Readings

There will be some additional suggested readings for each week of the course on the Resource List and Learn pages. Some of these will be discussed in the lectures each week. Unlike the core readings, you are not expected to read all of these. But if you find a topic particularly interesting, or if you are planning to write a piece of assessed

work about it, the listed additional readings are good starting points for thinking further about the topics we are covering.

You might also like to do some further research of your own about some of the topics on the course. Encyclopaedias are a good starting point. Avoid Wikipedia for anything but the quickest introductory summary of a topic or idea – and even then, be aware that it can often be inaccurate or misleading on philosophy. Instead, there are dedicated internet encyclopaedias of philosophy that provide useful, comprehensive overviews of many topics on this course:

[The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (SEP)

[The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) (IEP)

The following are all good starting points for further research:

[Philosophy Compass](#) (A journal of up-to-date survey articles on philosophical topics)

[The Diversity Reading List](#) (A list of readings, organised by topic, by authors from groups that are historically and currently underrepresented in philosophy)

[PhilPapers](#) (A large database of philosophy papers)

If you come across a reading or resource that you find particularly useful, please let your tutor or the course organiser know – we might add it to the course this year or in future!

Tutorials

You will have weekly tutorials during weeks 2 through 11 of the semester. These give you a chance to further discuss topics and issues from the readings and lectures, including any points that you found particularly interesting, puzzling or unclear. It is a good idea to make notes of these points as you do the reading and watch the lectures, and bring them to tutorials to discuss. Your tutor might also ask you to do some additional preparation for the tutorials each week.

Attendance at tutorials is compulsory. Your tutor will maintain a register of attendance, and unexplained absences will be brought to the attention of your Personal Tutor. If you need to miss a tutorial for any reason, please inform your tutor and the Course Secretary as soon as possible.

The Timetabling Department will allocate you a suitable tutorial group based on your timetable. Should you wish to change the group you have been allocated to, you will need to fill in the *Tutorial Group Change form* on the Timetabling Department's [webpage](#).

Lecturer Q&A

Every Friday from 1510-1600 there will be a Q&A session, hosted on Learn, where the course organiser will (do his best to) answer questions about the course content, offer advice about how to succeed in the course, and talk further about the topics we are studying.

Assessment

This course has three assessments:

- A **midterm essay** of 1500 words, worth 25% of your final mark. This will be due on **Wednesday, 3rd November by 12pm (midday, UK time)**. The essay questions will be made available on Learn on Monday, 11th October.
- A **final assignment** worth 70% of your final mark. This will be due on **Wednesday, 15th December by 12pm (midday, UK time)**. The essay questions will be made available on Learn on Monday, 22nd November.
- **5 short assignments** collectively worth 5% of your final mark. These will be short, automatically-marked quizzes asking basic comprehension questions about the core readings. They will be due by 12pm on the following Wednesdays: 13th October; 20th October; 27th October; 17th November; 24th November.

Detailed information concerning assignments, essay titles, readings, and submission procedures will be available on Learn. In addition to the general advice about essay-writing that will be provided on Learn, in lectures, and in tutorials, you are encouraged to make use of the support and resources of the [PPLS Skills Centre](#)

Word Count: The word count of your essay and assignments, including footnotes but excluding bibliography, must not exceed the specified word limit. The precise word count must be written on the coversheet. Overlong essays will be penalised according to the following rule: 1% of the maximum obtainable mark will be deducted for every 100 words, or part thereof, over the word limit. So, exceeding the word limit by 1-100 words incurs a deduction of 1%; exceeding by 101-200 words incurs a deduction of 2%; and so on.

Resits: The resit takes place in **April/May**. Students will receive an individual notification from the Teaching Office regarding the release date and the deadline of the resit assessment.

Marking Scheme

The essays for the course will be marked according to the [Grade-related marking guidelines for Philosophy](#). You are encouraged to read these guidelines carefully, and try to use them to improve your work prior to submission.

The University's general marking scheme is here: [Common Marking Scheme](#)

Exemplar essays

Some past students have kindly agreed for us to use their essays for this course as anonymised exemplars. These will be made available on Learn. We encourage you to read these essays in conjunction with the Philosophy-specific marking guidelines. In doing so, think about the strengths and weaknesses of the essay, why the essays fell into their grade-band, and how they could have been improved.

Visiting undergraduates

Assessment arrangements for visiting undergraduates are the same as for other students.

Learn

Please check the Learn page for the course and your university email regularly. All course materials and assessment information will be posted on Learn, as well as any important updates and announcements about the course.

Getting in Touch

If you have a question regarding lecture content you should ask it in your tutorial group and/or contact the Course Organiser (Dave.Ward@ed.ac.uk) to discuss it.

For other questions about academic matters, contact the Course Organiser. For questions about the administration of the course please contact the Course Secretary, Vera Spiliotakou (via: philinfo@ed.ac.uk).