ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

Winter Term, 2014

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Offices Hours:
• Monday: 3:00 - 4:00
• Tuesday: 10:30 - 11:30
• Thursday: 10:30 - 11:30
• By Appointment.

COURSE GOALS:
This course offers students a historical and systematic introduction to the dominant tradition of philosophical research in contemporary Anglo-American universities: namely, so-called “analytic philosophy.” The goal of the course is to familiarize students with the following:

• The distinctive methods of analytic philosophy: i.e. formal logic, semantic and pragmatic analysis, the identification of logical form, and the suspicion regarding the meaningless of metaphysical statements.
• The distinctive historical influences of analytic philosophy: i.e. Immanuel Kant, Gottlob Frege, and David Hume.
• The untenability of atomistic, verificationist, and conventionalist theories of meaning.
• The eventual demise of the “analytic conception of language.”
• The apparent futility of offering a “naturalistic reduction” of intentionality.
• The emergence of a variety of features that define contemporary philosophy of language: namely, holism, inferentialism, (moderate) contextualism, externalism, and revolutionary semantic innovation.

Recommended for students interested in linguistics, cognitive science, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience because this tradition of philosophy establishes the conceptual foundations for contemporary research in these fields. Moreover, students of mathematics and the natural sciences are encouraged to matriculate because analytic philosophy understood itself as spelling out the foundations of such fields. This course is a companion course to Philosophy of Language, which focuses upon the contemporary semantics and pragmatics, the offspring of the historical tradition of the “analytic conception of language.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
In the late 19th Century and early 20th Century, figures such as Bernard Bolzano, Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, and G. E. Moore inherited and radicalized Kant’s aspiration to offer a systematic critique of traditional metaphysics by demonstrating the meaningless of metaphysical propositions. While endorsing Kant’s demand for a critique of traditional metaphysics, they nevertheless strongly opposed (1) Kant’s grounding of the mathematics and geometry in (transcendental forms of) human intuition (2) Kant’s grounding of scientific validity in apriori forms of cognition. Refining and developing Frege’s predicate calculus, Russell sought to ground mathematics in formal logic enriched with set theory, not human intuition – a project called “logicism” – and to uncover the logical structure of thoughts and statements in the analysis of propositional forms.
Inspired by Humean empiricism – itself a stunning blow to both ancient and rationalist metaphysics – Russell and Moore developed a neo-empiricist logical atomism that grounded the meaningfulness of thought in basic or elemental propositions subject to empirical confirmation. The use of formal logical languages, the analysis of propositional form, the grounding of mathematics in logical deduction, and treatment of science as grounded in empirical confirmations – it’s these features of that initially defined what came to be called “analytic philosophy,” with its pronounced suspicion that classical and rationalist metaphysics were simply meaningless.

The next phase of this neo-empiricist critique of metaphysics is defined by the early work of Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, and the Vienna Circle, consisting of such notables as Moritz Schlick, Otto Neurath, and Rudolph Carnap. Wittgenstein’s critique of metaphysics took the pro-nounced Neo-Kantian form of an analysis, not of thought, but instead of linguistic or propositional intelligibility. A reflexive study of language, not mind, defined this enterprise, with a pronounced focus upon assertions as the primary function of language, leaving moral and aesthetic statements victim to the suspicion that they too, like metaphysical statements, were meaningless. Wittgenstein’s and Carnap’s works were exemplary of the school’s aspiration to ground philosophy as the study of meaning – that is, as semantic analysis – delegating issues of truth to empirical sciences. This division of labor between philosophy and science – the former the (apriori) semantic study of meaning, the latter the (aposteriori) empirical study of truth – is the core of the “analytic conception of language.” Strongly influenced by Humean empiricism, the Vienna Circle defined meaningfulness in terms of verifiability, which, like Hume’s razor, summarily amputated any linguistic formation not subject to sensory (dis-) confirmation. This cluster of motifs was called “logical positivism,” and it defined the spirit of philosophy in the 20s and 30s, which called for the development of an ideal formal language free of vagueness and ambiguity of ordinary language.

Logical positivism quickly succumbed to devastating criticism of its atomistic approach to language, its verifiability criterion of meaning, and its Quixotic ideal of an artificial formal language free of defect. Reaction to its failings took two forms. In England, the later Wittgenstein, John Austin, Paul Grice, P. F. Strawson, John Searle, and G. E. Moore insisted upon the study of ordinary language and experience, emphasizing the great variety of things we do in language and the crucial role of practical contexts of use. For ordinary language philosophers, questions of meaning and truth were domiciled in the messy, open-ended, and historically changing circumstances of everyday experience and language. In the U.S., John Van Ornum Quine singlehandedly demonstrated that the “analytic conception of language” – i.e. the idea that the study of meaning is independent from considerations of truth – is wholly misguided. Quine’s famous “indeterminacy of translation” and “inscrutability of reference” arguments demonstrated the interdependence of meaning and truth. For Quine, the “analytic conception of language” was itself a residual metaphysical theory that postulated a realm of ideal meaning entities, the presumed privileged (apriori) subject matter of philosophy as distinct from empirical (aposteriori) scientific investigation. Because language functions holistically, verification is never atomistic but reliant upon co-functioning collateral assumptions (Quine-Duhem thesis). The lasting legacy of English ordinary language philosophy is speech act theory or simply “pragmatics” – i.e. the study of utterances – while the lasting legacy of Quine is not his naturalism and behaviorism but, instead, his holism in the philosophy of language. The lesson that many drew from this phase of Anglo-American philosophy was the inextricable interdependence of semantic and pragmatic approaches in the philosophy of language and mind.

Nevertheless, continuing formal developments in the philosophy of language such as Goedel’s incompleteness theorem, Tarski’s truth schema, Chomsky’s generative grammar, and modal logic set the stage for a sustained re-assertion of the independence and primacy of semantic analysis over pragmatic contextualization. Moreover, the so-called “direct reference revolution” challenged the established Fregean approach, according to which reference was always “indirect” – i.e. mediated by senses (Sinne) – sparked a renewed insistence upon a purely “semantic” or computational approach to linguistic meaning. Although there are many ways of framing just what is at stake in the contemporary semantics/pragmatics debate, one way to emphasize its importance is to underscore that semantics focuses language as a formal system while pragmatics focuses upon language users, who variably deploy linguistic constructions in variable circumstances. Simply put, the boundaries between the philosophy of language and mind are shifting. The stakes of the contemporary “semantics/pragmatics” debate are high because it has palpable implications for current research in linguistics, cognitive science, cognitive psychology, and artificial intelligence.
Participation and Attendance: Participation is 15% of your grade. For the purposes of evaluation, I consider attendance a necessary yet not sufficient condition for participation (you can’t participate unless you attend, but simply attending does not mean you are fully participating). So, if you miss more than 3 days without advance notice or extenuating circumstances you will automatically lose this 15%. If you must miss a day due to family emergencies or other extenuating circumstances then please e-mail me in advance (if possible). Please also e-mail me whenever you miss class for other reasons. As for participation: you need to be an active participant to get full participation (i.e.: contribute to in-class debate, answer questions, critique an author or a point by a fellow classmate, etc). This means that you should always come to class having thoroughly read the assigned readings. Apart from lecture we will use structured questions and class discussion to analyze the readings; both methods require familiarity with the text and active questioning based on that familiarity.

Paper writing standards: Writing a philosophy paper is different from the paper writing you might do for other classes. Although many of the questions we will discuss have no single “correct” answer there are nevertheless better and worse ways to construct an argument. You will be graded on how well you defend your views (whatever they may be) not the content of your views. For guidance please read Jim Pryor’s essay “How to Write a Philosophy Paper” (required). Even though his writing style can be snarky, it helps: [link](http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html). You should strive to clearly and succinctly express your arguments. This may involve an accurate, short summary of another’s arguments. Please always keep in mind that when writing you need to express yourself very clearly, as I can only grade what you write on the page. Even if you know a theory or argument well in your head, I can only grade what you write (there is no fair way evaluate what someone intends to write but does not clearly or unambiguously express). I write fairly detailed comments on each student’s paper in order to explain why you have earned a certain grade. Comments are meant to help you identify your strengths and weaknesses and to do better on the next paper. If you ever feel that my comments show that I have misunderstood what you wrote then please meet with me and we will go over the paper.

Turning in writing and extensions: All writing assignments are due in class on the due date. Assignments will be counted down 1/3 of a grade (i.e.: A to A-, or B- to C+) for each day (or part of a day) they are late. It is important to turn papers in on time. Extensions are not unless there are documentable extenuating circumstances.

Laptops and cell phones: This class involves engaged discussion. A distraction-free environment where people can focus on the material is always the best for discussion. Because laptops and other electronic devices typically produce a variety of distractions, they are simply not allowed. Anyone seen using such a device during class will be counted as “absent” on that day.

Discussion questions: I distribute questions via email each week to help you focus on the most salient issues within the readings. You are strongly encouraged to send me questions before class, which will allow me to answer them, sending both question (anonymously submitted) and my response before class for the benefit of the entire class. It’s crucial, then, that you check your email on a daily basis, particularly in the morning before class, when I often answer email questions that students have sent me. Although we will discuss some of these questions in class we will not always get to every question. I encourage you to think about the questions we do not get to after class and re-read the material with them in mind. Doing so will help you on assignments and papers. You are also encouraged to come to office hours to discuss any questions that we don’t get to in class or other aspects of the class as well.

Readings: Carefully read and make marginal comments on the scheduled readings before class, marking difficult passages so that we can review them in class. The readings in this course are challenging and often require a second reading before class. Because the course is quickly paced and developmentally structured, it’s crucial that you do not fall behind on the schedule of readings. You are encouraged to come to office hours to talk further about the readings. Because Friday classes are only 40 minutes we will primarily use this time for in class discussion and review of the more difficult aspects contained in each respective theory. Readings assigned for Friday are review readings. This
means that you should re-read the material (not read it for the first time) before coming to class on Friday.

**Summaries of an author’s views on a given issue:** For each of the 4 classical authors we cover I assign a prompt asking you to summarize the author’s views on a particular issue. Because the prompts will be fairly straightforward, your response should be short: 350-400 words! You only need to complete 3 of the 4 prompts and you may choose which 3 to write. But be aware that these prompts are assigned as we go along. This means that if you choose to skip one prompt you must then do all the subsequent ones (i.e.: if you skip Hobbes, you must write on Locke, Rousseau and Kant).

**Grading breakdown:**
- Attendance and participation: 15%
- 3 short summaries (350-400 words each) throughout the term: 30% (each worth 10%)
- Midterm paper: 25%
- Final paper: 30%

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

**RECOMMENDED BACKGROUND TEXTS:**

**READING SCHEDULE**

**The Strict Definition of “Analytic Philosophy”: The Separation of Meaning and Truth in Semantic Theorizing:**

- **Week One:**
  - **Tuesday:** Introductory Lecture: Frege’s Threefold Distinction between Sense, Reference, and Idea.
  - **Thursday:**
    - Schwartz: “Russell and Moore”
    - Romanos: “The Rejection of Metaphysics and the ‘Linguistic Turn’”

**The Rise and Fall of Logical Positivism and the Vienna Circle: Quine’s Indeterminacy Theses and the Duhem-Quine Thesis:**

- **Week Two:**
  - **Tuesday:**
    - Schwartz: “Wittgenstein, the Vienna Circle, and Logical Positivism”
    - Romanos: “What Language Says as Determined by Rules”
The Rise of Ordinary Language Philosophy in England:
- Week Five:
  - Tuesday:
  - Thursday:
    - Schwartz: “Responses to Ordinary Language Philosophy: Logic, Language, and Mind”

Modal Logic, Essentialism, and Externalism:
- Week Six:
  - Tuesday:
    - Schwartz: “The Rebirth of Metaphysics”
  - Thursday:
    - Schwartz: “The Rebirth of Metaphysics” (continued)
- Week Seven:
  - Tuesday:
    - Schwartz: “Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds: Kripke, Putnam, and Donnellan”
  - Thursday:
    - Schwartz: Naming, Necessity, and Natural Kinds: Kripke, Putnam, and Donnellan” (continued)

Analytic Philosophy Today: The Semantics/Pragmatics Debate in the Context of the Direct Reference Revolution and Neo-Pragmatist Approaches to Meaning:
- Week Eight:
  - Tuesday:
    - Jeffrey C. King and Jason Stanley: “Semantics, Pragmatics, and the Role of Semantic Content,” from Semantics versus Pragmatics. [Handout]
  - Thursday:
    - Francois Recanati: Introduction, Literal Meaning [Handout]
    - Francois Recanati: Introduction, Truth Conditional Pragmatics [Handout]
- Week Nine:
  - Tuesday:
Francois Recanati: Introduction, *Perspectival Thought: A Plea for Moderate Relativism* [Handout]

- **Thursday:**
  - Review:

- **Week Ten:**
  - **Tuesday:**
    - Review:
  - **Thursday:**
    - Review & Evaluations

- **Finals Week:**