

PHILOSOPHY 52010
PRACTICAL DETERMINANTS OF THOUGHT AND MEANING
University of Chicago, autumn 2010

Course Instructor: Jason Bridges
Office hours: Tuesdays 1pm-3pm, Stuart 231C

DESCRIPTION

Our practical interests and aims help determine the contents of our thoughts and utterances. That is true at least in the obvious respect that our interests and aims help determine what we attend to, what we expend energy thinking about, and what we find worth mentioning. Is it true in any deeper or more philosophically significant respect? From early American pragmatism to contemporary “contextualism” philosophers have defended versions of a positive answer to this question. We will focus our engagement with this question by concentrating on a related series of views about the nature of concepts and knowledge.

READINGS

The following texts are required and will be available for purchase at the Seminary Cooperative Bookstore:

Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford University Press, 2005).
Mark Wilson, *Wandering Significance* (Oxford University Press, 2008).

The remaining course readings will be available through the course’s Chalk website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a fifteen page paper due on December 7, in Professor Bridges’s mailbox in the Philosophy Dept. Office (Stuart 202). The topic must be approved ahead of time. Topics must concern an issue discussed in the class and papers must make significant use of course readings. Late papers will not be graded until the winter quarter.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

- This schedule may be subject to modification as the quarter unfolds.
- Readings marked “*further*” won’t be a focus of class discussion but are worth reading, particularly if you’re writing a paper on the topic at issue.

Part I: Setting the stage

<u>Week</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1	Four grades of contextual involvement in truth	
2	Can decision play a role in constituting moral truth?	Peter Winch, “The Universalizability of Moral Judgments” David Wiggins, “Truth, and Truth as Predicated of Moral Judgements”

Part II: Knowledge and its purposes

3	Contextualism and subject-sensitive invariantism	Keith DeRose, “Contextualism and knowledge attributions” Jason Stanley, <i>Knowledge and Practical Interests</i> , introduction, chapters 1 and 5 <i>Further</i> : Fantl and McGrath, “Evidence, pragmatics and justification”
4	Knowledge and intellectualism	Jason Stanley, <i>Knowledge and Practical Interests</i> , chapter 6 Keith DeRose, <i>The Case for Contextualism</i> , chapter 6
5	Knowledge and the deliberative perspective	Timothy Williamson, “Contextualism, subject-sensitive invariantism and knowledge of knowledge” and “Knowledge, context and the agent’s point of view”

Part III: The pragmatic approach to truth conditions

6	Pragmatism and contextualism	Charles Travis, “Annals of Analysis”, “Pragmatics”, <i>Thought’s Footing</i> , chapter 1 <i>Further</i> : Robert Stainton, “Contextualism in epistemology and the context sensitivity of ‘knows’”
7	Pragmatism and provincialism	Jason Bridges, “Contextualism, pragmatism and provincialism” <i>Further</i> : Mark Richard, “Contextualism and relativism”

Part IV: Pragmatist visions

8	Explaining and projecting linguistic meaning	Wittgenstein, <i>Philosophical Investigations</i> , §§65-88 Jason Bridges, “Wittgenstein vs. contextualism” Stanley Cavell, <i>The Claim of Reason</i> , chapter 7
9	Linguistic engineering, part 1	Mark Wilson, <i>Wandering Significance</i> , chapter 3, chapter 5 (sections i-iv only), chapter 6 (sections v-vii optional)
10	Linguistic engineering, part 2	Mark Wilson, <i>Wandering Significance</i> , chapters 7 and 10