

Philosophy 53307 // Linguistics 53307

Language and Games

Autumn 2016

T 9:00–11:50

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Game theory is a rich area of formal tools developed over the last 70 years or so for the modeling of certain kinds of rational interaction. The concept of a game plays a prominent role in the writings of several distinguished philosophers of language such Ludwig Wittgenstein and David K. Lewis. It is thus natural to ask to what extent game theory can play an important role in explaining distinct linguistic phenomena. The goal of this class is to explore this question from a philosophical and linguistic perspective, focusing on issues in natural language semantics and pragmatics.

BOOKS

The relevant literature is massive and it is unavoidable to omit a lot of interesting discussions. The following book is required for the class:

— Lewis, *Convention*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1969)

A new edition of the book was published in 2002 by Wiley-Blackwell and is available for purchase at the Seminary Coop Bookstore (5751 S Woodlawn Avenue). The book is also on reserve at Regenstein. All of the remaining course readings will be available through the course's Chalk website.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There will be a substantial research paper (15+ pages) due on December 6th, in Professor Willer'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.

ROADMAP

The following schedule provides an overview over the topics that we will address during this semester as well as the assigned readings. Additional recommended readings will be announced in class. Readings may change as the semester goes on. Updated versions of this syllabus will be posted on Chalk as changes are made.

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 1	Setting the Stage	Ayer, <i>Language, Truth and Logic</i> (selections) Quine, "Truth by Convention" Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"
Week 2	Introduction to Game Theory	Benz et al., "An Introduction to Game Theory for Linguists," §§1–2
Week 3	Convention I	Lewis, <i>Convention</i> , Chs. 1–3
Week 4	Convention II	Lewis, <i>Convention</i> , Chs. 4–5 Lewis, "Languages and Language"

Date	Topic	Readings
Week 5	Objections and Replies	Burge, "On Knowledge and Convention" Gilbert, "Game Theory and "Convention"" Gilbert, "Agreements, Conventions, and Language" Hawthorne, "A Note on Languages and Language" Lewis, "Meaning without Use: Reply to Hawthorne" O'Leary-Hawthorne, "Meaning and Evidence: A Reply to Lewis"
Week 6	Implicature	Grice, "Logic and Conversation" Horn, "Toward a New Taxonomy for Pragmatic Inference" Gazdar, <i>Pragmatics</i> (selections)
Week 7	Game Theory in Pragmatics	Franke, "Game Theory in Pragmatics" Parikh, "Communication and Strategic Inference" Benz, "Utility and Relevance of Answers" Benz and van Rooij, "Optimal Assertions and What They Implicate"
Week 8	Free Choice and IBR	Franke, "Quantity Implicatures, Exhaustive Interpretation, and Rational Conversation"
Week 9	Weak Dominance Reasoning	Rothschild, "Game Theory and Scalar Implicatures"
Week 10	Conclusion and Outlook	Burnett, "Signaling Games, Sociolinguistic Variation and the Construction of Style"