

University of London MA in Philosophy 2001-2

Seminar Course Schedule for Philosophy of Language

Day: Thursday **Time: 6.00 - 7.30pm in 319 Gresse St, Birkbeck College**
(except wks 6-7 in Council Room)

Convener: Dr Barry C Smith, Birkbeck College

Intended audience: M.A. students

Aims of Course:

- to give students an understanding of distinctive philosophical problems concerning language, including: the nature of linguistic meaning; the relation between words and objects; the distinction between reference and quantification, the connection between speakers and languages, speakers' knowledge of language
- to acquaint students with leading thinkers' views on these topics
- to equip students with the concepts used to analyze and theorize about meaning and reference

Objectives:

Students who complete the course satisfactorily will:

- be able to expound and critically assess the views of leading thinkers on the nature of linguistic meaning, the relation of reference and the nature of speaker's knowledge
- be able to display competent use of the technical terms employed in philosophical theorising about language, including a critical understanding of: the

distinction between referring expressions and quantifier phrases; compositional theories of meaning

- be able to discuss critically a number of debates in philosophy of language
- have an appreciation of the bearing of central problems in the philosophy of language on issues in metaphysics, epistemology, philosophical logic and philosophy of mind

There will be 20 seminars (10 in Term 1 and 10 in Term 2).

Each seminar will last for an hour and a half and will comprise a presentation by the lecturer followed by discussion.

Term 1

Weeks 1-10: Michael Martin: *Reference, Truth and Meaning*

The nature of reference, linguistic devices of reference and quantification, the analysis of meaning, the relation between truth and reference, truth conditional theories of meaning.

Reading Week Term 1: 5th to 9th November

Term 2

Weeks 1-10 Barry Smith *Knowledge of Language*

The nature of language and the relation between speakers and languages. Theories of meaning as theories of understanding, the nature of speakers' knowledge of language, language and psychology.

Reading Week Term 2: 11th to 15th February

Assessment:

Students will sit a degree examination at the end of their final year. Part-time students will sit a practice exam (sessional test) at the end of their first year.

Reminder for Birkbeck Students - essay requirements: Part-time M.A. students must have submitted an essay for a tutorial by the end of Term 2 (earlier is fine) and submit another essay in Term 3. (You may do more essays than this.) Full-time M.A. students will be expected to produce at least one essay per term.

Students should submit essays to the relevant tutor in their own college. The Birkbeck M.A. Subject Tutor for Mind is Dr Barry Smith, and essays by Birkbeck students should be presented to him in the first instance.

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