

Syllabus

Philosophy 6014: Speech Acts and Pragmatics

Dr. Brian Epstein

Close examination of speech act theory, including the work of Austin, Strawson, Grice, Searle, and Bach and Harnish. Particular attention will be paid to linguistically relevant speech acts, such as naming and asserting. Also discussion of the relationship between pragmatics and semantics and the connection between speech acts and intention-based theories of meaning.

Required texts:

Steven Davis, ed., *Pragmatics: A Reader* (Oxford: OUP, 1991).

Yan Huang, *Pragmatics* (Oxford: OUP, 2007).

Austin, *How to do things with words*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Harvard Univ Press, 1962/1975)

Other sources cited (selections included in reader):

Searle, *Speech Acts*

Martinich, *Philosophy of Language*

Szabo, *Semantics vs. Pragmatics*

Tsohatzidis, *Foundations of Speech Act Theory*

Bach and Harnish, *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*

Schedule:

Introduction to Speech Acts

Jan. 22: Introduction

Sadock, "Speech Acts," in Horn and Ward, *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. (Reader)

Background on topics in pragmatics

Jan. 29: Grice and conversational implicature

Huang, Ch. 2.

Grice, "Logic and Conversation," in Davis (Ch. 19).

Sadock, "On Testing for Conversational Implicature," in Davis (Ch. 21).

Feb. 5: The semantics/pragmatics interface

Huang, Ch. 7.

Szabo, "Introduction," in Szabo, ed., *Semantics vs. Pragmatics*. (Reader)

Recanati, "Pragmatics and Semantics," in Horn and Ward (Reader)

Salmon, "Two Conceptions of Semantics," in Szabo, ed. (Reader)

Austin and Searle

Feb. 12: Introduction and Austin Part 1

Huang, Ch. 4.

Austin, "Performative Utterances," in Martinich.

Austin, *How to do things with words*, Lectures 1-5.

Feb. 19: Austin Part 2

Austin, *How to do things with words*, Lectures 6-12.

Feb 26: Searle Part 1

Searle, "What is a speech act?", in Davis.

Searle, *Speech Acts*, Ch. 1, 2.1-2.4

Mar. 5: Searle Part 2

Searle, *Speech Acts*, Ch. 2.5-3

Strawson and intention

Mar. 12: Gricean approaches

Strawson, "Convention and Intention in Speech Acts," in Davis.

Clark and Carlson, "Speech Acts and Hearers' Beliefs," in Davis.

Mar. 19: Bach and Harnish: Basic theory

Bach and Harnish, Chs. 1 and 2

Mar. 26: Taxonomies of speech acts

Searle, "A Taxonomy of Speech Acts," in Martinich.

Bach and Harnish, Ch. 3

Sadock, "Toward a grammatically realistic typology of speech acts," in Tsohatzidis, 393-406.

April 2: Bach and Harnish: Illocutionary acts and the speech act schema

Bach and Harnish, Ch. 4.1-4.2, Ch. 5

Controversies

April 9: Indirect speech acts

*Searle, "Indirect Speech Acts," in Davis.

*Morgan, "Two Types of Convention in Indirect Speech Acts," in Davis.

*Bertolet 1994, "Are there Indirect Speech Acts?" in Tsohatzidis, 335-49.

Optional:

Sadock 1972, "Speech Act Idioms," *CLS* 8, 329-39.

Gordon and Lakoff "Conversational Postulates" (1975), in Cole and Morgan.

Horn and Bayer 1984 "Short-circuited implicature: A negative contribution"

Bach and Harnish, Ch. 4.3

April 16: Referring and word-tokening

Searle, *Speech acts* Ch. 4, "Reference as a speech act"

Strawson, from *Individuals*

Alex Barber, "Testimony and Illusion"

April 23: Reference-fixing

Kripke, from *Naming and Necessity*

Kaplan, "Dthat"

Donnellan, "The Contingent A Priori and Rigid Designators"

Soames, from *Beyond Rigidity*

Jeshion, “Donnellan on Neptune”; “Soames on Descriptive Reference-Fixing”
Hawthorne and Manley

April 30: Naming

Epstein, “The Realpolitik of Reference”
Epstein on proxies and surrogates

Other potential topics

Presupposition

Huang, Ch. 3.

Stalnaker, “Pragmatic Presuppositions,” in Davis (Ch. 27)

Soames, “Presupposition” in *The Handbook of Philosophical Logic*, 1989.

Optional:

Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game,” in Davis (Ch. 25).

Heim, “On the Projection Problem for Presuppositions,” in Davis (Ch. 23).

Assertion

Stalnaker, “Assertion”

Watson, “Asserting and Promising”

Meaning

Grice, Searle, Avramides, Bach, Recanati, Schiffer

Illocutionary act potential: Alston

Grades:

Participation: 15%

Reaction papers: 25%

Paper: 60%

Weekly reaction papers:

- Two pages total per week, due in class. On the readings with asterisks in the list above. If there are two readings with asterisks, just one page on each.
- The idea is to demonstrate understanding of the reading, and to generate some thoughts for issues, problems, objections, topics for discussion. For each reaction, it's perfectly reasonable to devote half a page to a quick reconstruction of the argument, and half a page to your reactions.
- Reaction papers won't be assigned letter grades, but simply assessed for overall quality. Collect them and hand them in as a packet at the end of the term, with your final paper.

Participation:

- Is a requirement for the seminar. The idea of the seminar is to work through these difficult problems as a group, contributing to your own and the group's understanding.
- The purpose of the class is to understand and critically assess the literature and analyses in this field. Consequently, it's essential to do two (conflicting?) things:
 - To apply your critical faculties to the readings and the arguments of others in class
 - To listen to others and help direct the conversation constructively.
- In other words, it's required that you jump into the fray, and at the same time not violate the norms of constructive conversation.

Paper:

- In addition to the reaction papers, there will be one final paper of 15-20 pages, due at the end of the term.
- The topic should be of your choosing, though I'll be happy to give guidance or ideas. It should conform closely to the topics discussed in class, and deal with a specific (and reasonably narrow) part of the literature. Meet with me partway through the term to approve and help refine your topics.
- The paper should be a tightly argued piece of philosophy, with a specific claim, situated in the literature, arguments for the claim, and consideration of objections. The quality and precision of argumentation will be a principal criterion for the grading.

Blackboard:

- Readings will be posted on Blackboard, well in advance of the class session. (www.learn.vt.edu).
- Also, keep checking Blackboard for announcements, and changes to the syllabus. This syllabus is only preliminary, and is guaranteed to change as the term proceeds.
- We can start up a discussion board on Blackboard, if people are interested.