

Philosophy of Language

PHI 205

TUE THU 12:35-1:50

SPRING 2021



Course Description

Language is a central feature of human experience. We use language to make claims, make promises, make commands, write laws, tell jokes, tell lies, bullshit each other, insult each other, oppress each other....

This class explores fundamental questions about what language is, how language works, and how we use language to do these things. Some puzzles we will consider:

- ▶ What is language for? Communication? (Of ideas? Facts? Attitudes?) Cooperation? Manipulation? Oppression?
- ▶ What is meaning? How do words get meaning? How do names refer to things? What is the

meaning of a general term, like 'horse'? How do sentences manage to be true or false?

- ▶ How is meaning related to use? What features of our use of language go beyond meaning, and how should those be explained?

Course Modality

This class will be online. It will include both synchronous and asynchronous elements. Readings, lectures, and assignments will be asynchronous. We will use our scheduled class times for synchronous activities and group discussion. There will be opportunities for online asynchronous collaboration as well.

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