

# PHIL 192L

## TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE: DOING THINGS WITH WORDS

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*Preferred gender pronouns:* they, them, theirs

M-W-F 11-11:50am  
Douglas Hall 209  
*Office hours:*  
M-W-F 10-11am, and  
by appointment.

### Course description:

The question of free speech and whether or not speech should be regulated is not restricted to philosophers, lawyers and politicians. The free speech debate is also a public debate, and people inside and outside of academia, from the university campus to TV stations, engage in this discussion. Missing from this public debate is an articulation of how exactly speech can be harmful. This course provides conceptual tools to understand the pragmatics of discourse, and the different ways words can harm.

### Learning objectives:

- Identify and distinguish several relevant concepts and socio-linguistic phenomena (e.g. presupposition introduction, conversational score, conversational exercitives, discursive injustice, illocutionary disablement).
- Identify and distinguish different conceptual frameworks within the philosophy of language.
- Apply those concepts and frameworks to everyday conversations.
- Begin to develop an informed perspective on harmful speech and conversational dynamics.

### Required Materials:

Maitra, Ishani & Mary Kate McGowan (2012) *Speech and Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech*. Oxford University Press. Available at the bookstore.

Other required materials (e.g. texts, videos, podcast) will be made available on the course website.

### Grading policy and criteria:

There is a maximum of 100 points you can get in this course. Your total number of points is calculated by adding the points earned on the following assessment items:

Assessment	Details	Due date	Points (out of 100)
Quizzes 3x	Quiz #1: 5 points. Quizzes #2 and #3: 10 points.		25
Question+Comment	2 points each. See samples.	One per week, starting week 2, until week 13. Hard copy.	24
Handout	See instructions.	11/7 at the beginning of class. Hard copy.	5
Fieldwork	See instruction. 200-300 words. 3 points each.	11/26 at the beginning of class. Hard copy.	6
Analysis paper	800-1,100 words	11/28 at the beginning of class. Hard copy.	20
Presentation	See instructions.	At the end of the semester. Check schedule.	10
Participation	See below		10

### Description of assessment items:

**Quizzes:** Quizzes contain multiple-choice and short-answer questions. There are 3 quizzes, starting with quiz #1, which is worth five points. Quizzes #2 and #3 are worth 10 points each. There will be no make-up options (see “late submissions policy”). If you miss a quiz or arrive to class by the time the quiz is over, you do not earn any points.

**Question + Comment:** These are short questions + comments on the material for the week. You can make a question + comment on a single reading, or one that relates two or more reading in the same week. Students must submit one per week, starting week 2 and until week 13 (total: 12 Q+C). Check course site for samples.

Questions are evaluated as follows:

0: there is no question or the question is irrelevant.

0.5: the question is related to the readings but it doesn’t engage with the arguments; it shows misunderstanding of the reading or it deviates from the main ideas of the readings (e.g. it focuses on a marginal point, or it’s tangential).

1: the question engages with the argument; shows understanding of the material; points out the merits of the argument(s) or idea(s).

2: the question engages with the argument; shows understanding of the material; points out a problem with the argument, or proposes a counterexample, or suggest a future line of inquiry, or proposes an application of the argument(s) or main idea(s) to other domains or cases, or relates it to some other material discussed in class in an appropriate way.

**Handout:** You are expected to select a reading and develop a handout for it. The handout must summarize the argument of the reading. Format: it can be regular structured prose (up to one two-sided page), a mental map, a comic strip, a song (up to 2 mins), an animation (up to 2 mins), a collage ... be creative! (samples of handouts will be made available).

**Fieldwork:** On Fridays, we will discuss examples of language use in media outlets, blogs, or personal conversations, which we will analyze using what we learned in class. Students must choose one of the cases and submit it towards the end of the semester. Cases must be accompanied by a brief introduction connecting them to the class material, e.g. stating which notions or theories can be used to analyze the excerpt, what phenomenon it exemplifies, etc.

**Analysis paper:** You will select one of the assigned readings and analyze it. Follow the Philosophy Department's instructions on how to write an analysis paper:  
<http://www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/how-to-analyze.html>

**Presentation:** Depending on enrollment, presentations will be individual or in groups. See the course site for instructions and rubric.

**Participation:** You do not learn and come to understand complex arguments simply by passively soaking up what happens around you in the classroom. In order to learn, you need to take an active role in processing the course material.

If you think you can do well in this course by working alone at home, without participating in class, please consider the following: Respectful and constructive discussion is a critical part to learning and becoming a good thinker. The pathway to good ideas and well-formed arguments is usually not a lonely one, but one filled with contributions and insights from others, sometimes in the form of challenges and questions, sometimes in the form of suggestions or comments. It is important to keep in mind that in this course, and in many others, you can learn not only from the texts and from me, but also from your classmates. Class discussions are a good opportunity to learn from classmates and to practice your own argumentative skills. It is also a way to initiate collaborative projects.

Participation will be evaluated on two parameters: relevance and quality.

There is a maximum of 0.5 of a point per class, and a total of 10 points you can earn for participation. There are two participation formats: speaking in class, and writing your questions/comments and handing them to me **at the end of class**. Written participation contributions that were not handed to me at the end of each class will **not** be considered. If you feel uncomfortable speaking in class, come talk to me about it. I might help you with that. Check "resources" on how to get a good participation grade.

Participation also includes attendance and preparedness. If you miss several classes, you won't earn any points for participation. If you come to class without having read the assigned material and/or do not participate in group activities, you'll miss participation points.

## **Evaluation, general guidelines:**

**Knowledge:** your work needs to demonstrate correct interpretations of class material, distinguish among the different perspectives we discuss, and identify relevant notions.

**Critical thinking:** your work needs to demonstrate an ability to articulate and evaluate ideas, whether or not you agree with them.

**Communication:** your work needs to demonstrate the ability to transmit ideas in a way that is sensitive to your expected audience.

**Etiquette:** Respectful and constructive discussion is a critical part to learning and becoming a good thinker.

**Engagement according to academic parameters:** your work needs to demonstrate that the subject matter has been adequately researched and correctly cited.

**Creativity:** your work needs to demonstrate innovative approaches to the subject matter being discussed or presented. This can be done by connecting the subject matter to domains and questions you are familiar with.

## **Other Important Information**

**I am here to help:** Remember that I am here to help you learn as best as I can. Please utilize my office hours for additional feedback and guidance on course-related issues.

**Class behavior:** The classroom should be a safe space to discuss any topic, no matter how controversial (and we'll be discussing controversial matters!). We all have to build and maintain that safety by discussing respectfully, avoiding personal attacks, offensive epithets, and exclusive language. Any student who feels uncomfortable in class is encouraged to get in contact with me.

**Writing:** Writing is a critical part of your education, and it is especially important in philosophy. For free, one-on-one help with writing in any class, please visit the University Reading and Writing Center in Calaveras 128. The Writing Center can help you at any stage of your reading/writing processes: coming up with a topic, developing, or organizing a draft, understanding difficult texts, or developing strategies to become a better editor. To make an appointment visit the Reading and Writing Center in CLV 128. For current Writing Center hours and more information, visit the website at [www.csus.edu/writingcenter](http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter)

**Gender neutral writing:** In philosophy, gender-neutral writing is the accepted practice recommended by the American Philosophical Association. See the American Philosophical Association guidelines [www.apaonlinecsw.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language](http://www.apaonlinecsw.org/apa-guidelines-for-non-sexist-use-of-language).

**Plagiarism:** Plagiarizing someone else's work is a serious academic offence, and it is bad for many reasons. Always use quotation marks and a footnote citation to indicate sentences or passages you borrow from another author. Assignments in which plagiarism is found will at the least be graded at 0 (not just an F). All incidents of plagiarism will be reported both to the Department Chair and to the Judicial Officer in the Office of Student Affairs for possible further administrative sanction. You are responsible for reading and understanding the details of the University's plagiarism policy. All papers will be put through plagiarism software. See the current student handbook for further information on student rights and responsibilities. Here is a link to the university's honesty policy: <http://www.csus.edu/umannual/student/stu-0100.htm> Come talk to me if you are not sure about what constitutes plagiarism.

**Disability access statement:** If you have a verified need for an academic accommodation or materials in alternate media (i.e.: Braille, large print, electronic text, etc.) per the Americans with Disabilities Act or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, please contact me as soon as possible to arrange accommodations. It is your responsibility to provide documentation of disability to SSWD and meet with a SSWD counselor to request special accommodation before classes start. SSWD is located in Lassen Hall 1008 and can be contacted by phone at (916) 278-6955 (Voice); (916) 278-7239 (TDD only); or via email at [sswd@csus.edu](mailto:sswd@csus.edu). More information available here: <http://www.csus.edu/sswd/index.html>

**Email policy:**

I commit to respond to your emails within 2 business days. Please take into account that I don't carry a smart phone with internet access, and I don't check my email unless I'm working on my computer. If you haven't heard from me after three business days, please send me a follow-up email. Before emailing me with a question about the course, check the syllabus in case your question is already answered there. To facilitate communication, include your name and last name in the body of your email, and include the title of the course you are taking in your email's subject. Please follow the Philosophy Department's guide on how to correspond with your professor:

<http://www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/how-to-correspond.html>

**Late submissions and missed quizzes:**

Except for exceptional circumstances (e.g. a medical emergency), no late assignments will be accepted, and no make up for quizzes. In case of an emergency, get in contact with me before the deadline.

**Changes in policies:** If due to traveling or any other reason, I change any of the above conditions, I will inform of the change in both an announcement on the main page of the course, and an email to each participant. Please make sure the email address you provided for this course is the one you regularly check.

**Technology requirements:** Students must have a reliable way of accessing internet and SacCT. Technical problems must be directed to the ITC Help Line @ 278-7337 or [servicedesk@csus.edu](mailto:servicedesk@csus.edu)

**Basic needs support:** If you are experiencing challenges in the area of food and/or stable housing, help is just a click, email or phone call away! Sacramento State offers basic needs support for students who are experiencing challenges in these areas. Please visit our Basic Needs website to learn more about your options and resources available.

<https://www.csus.edu/basicneeds/>

**Other resources:**

Student Health & Counseling Services: <https://shcssacstate.org>

Dreamer Resource Center: <http://www.csus.edu/saseep/drc/>

University Writing Center: <http://www.csus.edu/writingcenter/>

Pride Center: <http://www.csus.edu/pride/>

Academic Advising: <http://www.csus.edu/acad/>

Multi-Cultural Center: <http://www.csus.edu/mcc/>

Women’s Resource Center: <http://www.csus.edu/wrc/>

Information Resources & Technology: <http://www.csus.edu/irt/>

ASI Food Pantry: <http://www.asi.csus.edu/programs/food-pantry/>

Basic Needs (Food, Housing, Financial Security): <http://csus.edu/basicneeds/index.html>

**Schedule:**

Important note: The schedule is subject to change, and will change if accommodations for special events need to be made. If the schedule changes, I will alert students in class, with an announcement on the course site, and via an email to the address you have registered with Sac State. It is your responsibility to come to class, check the course site and your Sac State-registered email.

week	Session	Day	Date	Topic	Readings for the day	Assignments due
1	1	M	27-Aug	Intro: What is this course about?		
	2	W	29-Aug	Syllabus overview + discussion rules		
	3	F	31-Sep	Doing things with words I	John Austin 1962, Lecture I	
2		M	3-Sep	Labor Day - No class		
	4	W	5-Sep	Doing things with words II	John Austin 1962, Lecture II	
	5	F	7-Sep	Review and activity		Last day to submit Q+C#1
3	6	M	10-Sep	Language games I	David Lewis 1979, I	
	7	W	12-Sep	Language games II	David Lewis 1979, II	
	8	F	14-Sep	Review and activity		Last day to submit Q+C#2 + Quiz #1

4	9	M	17-Sep	Speech that silences? I	Rae Langton 1993 I	
	10	W	19-Sep	Speech that silences? II	Rae Langton 1993 II	
	11	F	21-Sep	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#3</b>
5	12	M	24-Sep	Conversational exercitives I	Mary Kate McGowan 2004	
	13	W	26-Sep	Conversational exercitives II	Mary Kate McGowan 2009	
	14	F	28-Sep	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#4</b>
6	15	M	1-Oct	Language and persuasion I	Lynne Tirrell (book)	
	16	W	3-Oct	Language and persuasion II	Marina Sbisa 1999	
	17	F	5-Oct	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#5</b>
7	18	M	8-Oct	Authority of speech I	Ishani Maitra (book)	
	19	W	10-Oct	Authority of speech II	Rae Langton 2017a + Langton video 2018	
	20	F	12-Oct	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#6</b>
8	21	M	15-Oct	Beyond Belief I	Rae Langton 2012	
	22	W	17-Oct	Beyond Belief II	Mary Kate McGowan (book)	
	23	F	19-Oct	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#7 + Quiz #2</b>
9	24	M	22-Oct	Slurs I (online class)	Luvell Anderson (podcast)	
	25	W	24-Oct	Slurs II	Elisabeth Camp 2013	
	26	F	26-Oct	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#8</b>
10	27	M	29-Oct	Silencing and epistemic violence I	Kristie Dotson 2011	
	28	W	31-Nov	Silencing and epistemic violence II	Caroline West (book)	
	29	F	2-Nov	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#9</b>
11	30	M	5-Nov	Special event: Ethics Symposium		
	31	W	7-Nov	Blocking I	Rae Langton 2017b	<b>Handout</b>

		F	9-Nov	Blocking II (guest lecture)		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#10</b>
12	32	M	12-Nov	Veterans' Day - No class		
	33	W	14-Nov	Blocking III	Laura Caponetto forthcoming	
	34	F	16-Nov	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#11</b>
13	35	M	19-Nov	Thanksgiving - No class		
	36	W	21-Nov	Discursive injustice I	Rebecca Kukla 2014	
		F	23-Nov	Review and activity		<b>Last day to submit Q+C#12 + Quiz #3</b>
14	37	M	26-Nov	Discursive injustice II	Ayala 2018	<b>Fieldwork PAPER</b>
	38	W	28-Nov	Special topic		
	39	F	30-Nov	Presentations I		
15	40	M	3-Dec	Presentations II		
	41	W	5-Dec	Presentations III		
	42	F	7-Dec	Final discussion		