

Fall 2014: GPHIL and GLIB 6100-A
Speech Acts (GPHI 6039-A and 7591)
New School for Social Research
T 4-5:50pm
6 E. 16th Street, Room 909

Professor: Alice Crary (ext. 3074)
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Off. hrs: T 10:45-11:45, Th 1:45-2:45
& by appointment

Speech Acts – Syllabus

Course description

This is a course on contributions to philosophy of language that stress attention to complete acts of speech. At its heart is a reading of John Austin's *How to Do Things With Words*. We will discuss the work of commentators on Austin's oeuvre from both sides of the so-called 'continental divide' in philosophy, including writings by Paul Grice, John Searle, Cora Diamond, Charles Travis, Jacques Derrida, Judith Butler and Stanley Cavell). One concern will be assessing the continuing relevance of Austin's thought by considering it in the light of current debates that pivot on questions about the relationship between semantics and pragmatics – in particular, debates among advocates of literalism (or invariantism), contextualism and ordinary language philosophy. A second concern will be assessing the significance of these debates for how we conceive possibilities for moral and political speech.

Learning outcomes

At the end of this course, you should be able (i) to give a general overview both Austin's notion of a speech act and of related portions of Wittgenstein's work on language, (ii) to give a general overview of major disagreements about how to interpret the notion of a speech act, (iii) to explain implications of different interpretations for how we conceive possibilities of – moral and political – speech and (iv) to present your views about these matters clearly both orally and (v) in writing.

Required texts and other resources

You are required to have copies of the following texts:

J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*

Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*

Both books are available for purchase at Barnes & Noble (105 Fifth Avenue). All additional required and recommended course readings will be made available either in class or on our class Canvas site. If you are an *official* auditor in this class, you will have access to our course Canvas site. If you are an *unofficial* auditor, you will not have access to it. It should be possible to give unofficial auditors electronic access to course materials. If necessary, arrangements for this will be made during our first course meeting.

Course requirements/graded activities

There are two requirements for students enrolled for credit. You must give one presentation on seminar material during a week of your choosing (see the seminar schedule, below). If for some reason you are uncomfortable with public speaking, or find the seminar atmosphere unwelcoming, please come speak to me. I take issues of climate seriously, and I am committed to making our seminar welcoming for all. (See the remark "On fairness and the methods of this seminar," immediately below.) On the day on which you do your presentation, you should submit an approximately 5pp. double-spaced text. I will comment on your text, using the occasion to start a conversation with you about your plans for your

seminar paper. You must write one 12-15pp. paper, which will be due before or in class Tuesday, December 9th. Your grade for the course is based entirely on the paper you submit.

On fairness and the methods of this seminar

There is good evidence to suggest that implicit or unconscious bias is a serious issue in academic philosophy, and that it puts women and members of other underrepresented groups at a substantial disadvantage. One recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to do blind assessment. This is not possible in a small seminar in which I will be in close conversation with you about your individual writing projects. Another recommended strategy for combating implicit bias is to attend carefully to how one interacts with students (e.g., what form of address is used, how often speaking time is granted and to whom, and how much time individual students spend speaking). Throughout the semester, I will monitor my own practice with an eye to being fair to all.

Reaching me

My contact information is at the top of the first page of the syllabus. My regular office hours are in my office, room 1115 at 6 East 16th St. (11th floor), on Tuesday mornings (10:45-11:45) and Thursday afternoons (1:45-2:45). You can sign up for a meeting through Starfish. If my regular times are impossible for you, we can make an arrangement to meet at a time that works for you. You should feel free to contact me about any course-related issue, no matter how small. The best way to reach me is via email. I will try to respond to emails as quickly as possible. If you write to me about a substantive philosophical issue, I will most likely write back and suggest that we either meet to talk or chat on the phone.

Grading disputes

If you believe that there is something amiss with my evaluation of your work, you should let me know. I am open to discussion and am happy to re-read your work. I am also happy to read drafts, if you have them ready at least a week before the end of term.

Course policies

This course will adhere to New School university academic policies. This includes the university policy on Academic Honesty and Integrity. For details see <http://www.newschool.edu/leadership/provost/policies/academic-honesty/>. Of particular importance is the policy on plagiarism. Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of someone else's work as one's own in all forms of academic endeavor (such as essays, theses, examinations, research data, creative projects, etc), intentional or unintentional. Plagiarized material may be derived from a variety of sources, such as books, journals, internet postings, student or faculty papers, etc. This includes the purchase or “outsourcing” of written assignments for a course. A detailed definition of plagiarism in research and writing can be found in the fourth edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, pages 26-29. For further information on plagiarism, you should consult the Learning Center's website:

<http://www.newschool.edu/learning-center/virtual-handout-drawer/>

Academic resources for students

The university provides many resources to help students achieve academic and artistic excellence. These resources include:

The University (and associated) Libraries: <http://library.newschool.edu>

The University Writing Center: <http://www.newschool.edu/admin/writingcenter>

University Disabilities Services: In keeping with the university's policy of providing equal access for students with disabilities, any student with a disability who needs academic accommodations is welcome to meet with me privately. All conversations will be kept confidential. Students requesting any accommodations will also need to contact Student Disability Service (SDS). SDS will conduct an intake and, if appropriate, the Director will provide an academic accommodation notification letter for you to bring to me. At that point, I will review the letter with you and discuss these accommodations in relation to this course. Student Disability Services is located at 6 East 16th Street - 5th Floor. The phone number is (212) 229-5626. Students and faculty are expected to review the Student Disability Services webpage. The webpage can be found at <http://www.newschool.edu/student-services/disability-services/> and the office is available to answer any questions or concerns.

Tentative schedule of classes and readings (Please note that the schedule may change to accommodate student interest.)

Introduction of main themes

1. T, August 26th. No assigned reading. Tonight we will get started by discussing, very generally, how Austin's and Wittgenstein's contributions to philosophy of language were groundbreaking; how they have not yet been fully assimilated into philosophy of language; and how they have significant implications not only for how we conceive of language in general but for how we conceive moral and political speech more particularly.
Registered students sign up for seminar presentations

Austin's notion of a speech act

2. T, September 2nd J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Lectures I-IV.

Recommended (for philosophical context):
A.J. Ayer, "Critique of Ethics and Theology"
R.M. Hare, "Descriptive Meaning"
3. T, September 9th. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Lectures V-VIII.

Recommended: Austin, "Performative Utterances"
4. T, September 16th. J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Lectures IX-XII.

Recommended (for disclosure of my views):
Alice Crary, "Objectivity Revisited: A Lesson from the Work of J.L. Austin"

Austin at work

5. T, September 23rd. J.L. Austin, “A Plea for Excuses.”

Recommended:

Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Lectures I and II.

6. T, September 30th. J.L. Austin, “Other Minds.”

Recommended:

Austin, *Sense and Sensibilia*, Lectures III and IV.

Contradictory tendencies in Austin interpretation

7. T, September 30th. Jacques Derrida, “Signature Event Context” in *Limited, Inc.* and Judith Butler, “On Linguistic Vulnerability.”

Recommended:

Derrida, “Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion” in *Limited, Inc.*

8. T, October 14th. John Searle, “Austin on Locutionary and Illocutionary Acts”
John Searle, “Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida.”

Recommended:

Derrida, “Limited a, b, c...,”

Searle, “Literal Meaning,”

Paul Grice, “Logic and Conversation”

Jürgen Habermas, “Universal Pragmatics: Reflections on a Theory of Communicative Competence”

9. T, October 21st. Stanley Cavell, “Counter-Philosophy and the Pawn of Voice.”

Recommended:

Cavell, “Must We Mean What We Say?”

Cavell, “Austin at Criticism.”

Bringing Wittgenstein into the conversation

10. T, October 28th. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§1-67.

Recommended:

Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason*, pp.168-190

Cavell, “The Availability of Wittgenstein’s Later Philosophy”

11. T, November 4th. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §§143 and 185-202 and assorted passages (to be handed out).

Recommended:

Cora Diamond, “Rules: Looking in the Right Place”

James Conant, "Wittgenstein on Meaning and Use"

How significant a break from contemporary philosophy of language do Austin's – and Wittgenstein's – procedures represent?

12. T, Nov 11th. Charles Travis, "Pragmatism" and excerpts from Jason Stanley *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (the latter to be handed out).
Recommended: Jason Bridges, "Wittgenstein vs. Contextualism"
13. T, Nov 18th. Avner Baz, *When Words are Called for*, Chapters 4 and 5.
Recommended: Charles Travis, *The Uses of Sense*, pp.156-166.
14. T, Dec 2nd. Sandra Laugier, *Why We Need Ordinary Language Philosophy*, Chapters 6 and 7. Recommended: Laugier, *Why We Need Ordinary Language Philosophy*, "Introduction"

Illustrations – some implications of our themes for feminist thought

15. T, December 9th. Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts" Nancy Bauer, "How to Do Things With Pornography." Recommended: Linda Zerilli, "Doing Without Knowing: Feminism's Politics of the Ordinary."
**We will have a small course reception during class tonight
Seminar papers due before or in class**