**Organization of Course**

The course will meet for lecture every Tuesday and Thursday at 10am in Emerson 104. There will be a section for the course, which will meet at a time and place to be determined. This section will be taught by a teaching fellow, should enrollment warrant the assignment of one; otherwise, the instructor will teach it himself. The section is intended for undergraduates and graduate students not in philosophy and is open only to those enrolled in the class. There will be a graduate section, the meeting-time for which will be arranged during the second week of the course, and which is open to graduate students in philosophy who are enrolled in the course—and, possibly, to auditors, although we shall have to wait to see how many people are enrolled before making that decision.

**Readings**

We shall be reading a number of articles by different authors. Unfortunately, there is no collection of articles on the philosophy of language which suits our purpose. I would like to have been able to produce a “sourcebook” containing xeroxes of the various articles and then have these distributed, for the cost of the photocopying, in the department office. Unfortunately, however, current copyright law prohibits this, making no distinction between uses of copyrighted material for educational purposes and for commercial purposes, nor caring at all whether what is charged for sourcebooks merely covers the costs of photocopying or exceeds it. It is still possible to make sourcebooks. But to do so, one has to obtain permission from the various copyright holders, and then pay them a royalty which frequently exceeds 25¢ per page. That adds up. Big time.

However, each of you is free to make a copy of the relevant reading materials, for your own personal use. (Why exactly it should be illegal for me to make the photocopies for you, say, after you’ve given me the money to do so, is somewhat puzzling.) So, what we’re going to have to do is this: I’ll put both the books and journals from which the various articles come, and individual copies of them, on reserve in Robbins Library. It will be up to each of you to make copies of the articles along the way, or to make a copy of the complete packet. Please make your photocopies from the copies I put on reserve to save wear and tear on the books. If any of this bothers you, write your senator or representative.

**Course Requirements**

Every student in the course will be required to submit one short (3-5 page) paper, from a list of topics, to be due 9 November. For undergraduates and graduate students from departments other than Philosophy, I should be able to offer a choice between writing a longer term paper, of 15-20 pages, and writing a second short paper (this one 5-8 pages) while also taking a final examination. Graduate students, on the other hand, will be required to write a term paper of 20-25 pages.
Syllabus

Introduction: Literal Meaning

21 September
Introductory Meeting

23 September
We unfortunately will not have time to discuss Grice’s broader views on language, except briefly, when we read Strawson’s “Meaning and Truth”. But there is a lot more to be said about these questions—and they could form a course in themselves. A number of important papers are collected in Steven Davis, ed., Pragmatics: A Reader (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). Another interesting topic, on which we won’t touch, is metaphor: For papers on that subject, see Robert Harnish, ed., Basic Topics in the Philosophy of Language (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1994).

Meaning and Truth-Theory: Davidson’s Proposal

28 September
Donald Davidson, “Theories of Meaning and Learnable Languages”, in his Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 3-15
The basic idea here goes back at least to Frege; Wittgenstein too was fond of stressing the ‘creativity’ or ‘productivity’ of language. For another modern development of it, specifically in relation to syntactic theory, see Noam Chomsky, Aspects of the Theory of Syntax (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1965), and elsewhere.

30 September
Donald Davidson, “Truth and Meaning”, in Inquiries, pp. 17-36

5 October
For further material on Tarski’s theory of truth, see Alfred Tarski, “The Concept of Truth in Formalized Languages”, in his Logic, Semantics, Metamathematics (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), pp. 152-278. For a simplified account of Tarski’s theory, see W.V.O. Quine, Philosophy of Logic, 2nd ed. (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1986), Ch. 3, and material on the instructor’s web site.

7 October
There is now a large literature on Davidson’s analysis of adverbs. For a survey, see Terrence Parsons, Events in the Semantics of English (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1990).

Two of the hardest unsolved such problems concerning logical form have to do with ‘propositional attitude’ ascriptions, such as “John believes that dogs are furry”, and with mass terms, such as ‘water’ or ‘gold’. For some papers on the former, see Nathan Salmon and Scott Soames, eds., Propositions and Attitudes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). Unfortunately, I know of no collection of papers on the latter problem.

12 October
There has been much research on context-dependence in the past couple decades. For some relevant papers, see Steven Davis, Pragmatics: A Reader, cited above. Perhaps the most important paper, though it is very difficult, is David Kaplan, “Demonstratives”, in J.Almog, et al., eds., Themes From Kaplan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989.)

14 October
19 October  

**Understanding, Communication, and Knowledge**

21 October  
The approach Strawson is defending is originally due to H.P. Grice. See his William James Lectures, in *Studies in the Ways of Words*, pp. 1-143, esp. the paper “Utterer’s Meaning and Intentions”, and “Meaning”, in the same volume, pp. 213-23.

26 October  

28 October  

2 November  
Donald Davidson, “Reply to Foster” and “Radical Interpretation”, in *Inquiries*, pp. 171-9 and 125-39

4-9 November  

9 November  
**Short Paper Due**

11 November  
**No Class: Veterans’ Day Holiday**

16 November  


**Tacit Knowledge: An Introduction to the Problems**

18 November  

**23 November**


**25 November**

No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday

Meaning and Truth

**30 November**

Michael Dummett, “What is a Theory of Meaning? (I)”, in *Seas of Language*, pp. 1-33

2 December

Michael Dummett, “What is a Theory of Meaning? (II)”, in *Seas of Language*, pp. 34-93. Themes in both of these papers are further developed in other papers in *The Seas of Language*, esp. “What Do I Know When I Know a Language?”, “Language and Truth”, and “Truth and Meaning”.

7 December


9 December

Richard G. Heck, Jr., “Use and Meaning”, draft. A draft of this paper is available on the instructors web site, but he hopes to have a revised version ready by the time it is needed.

**14-16 December**


The best overview of Dummett’s approach to these sorts of questions is probably his valedictory lecture, “Realism and Anti-realism”, in *Seas of Language*, pp. 462-78. The text in which the argument is most fully developed is the very difficult paper, “The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic”, in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, pp. 215-47. See also “The Source of the Concept of Truth”, in *Seas of Language*, pp. 188-207. For a specific application of the ‘argument’, see “The Reality of the Past”, in his *Truth and Other Enigmas*, pp. 358-74 There is a good exposition of the ‘argument’ for anti-realism in the Introduction to Crispin Wright’s *Realism, Meaning, and Truth*, 1-43, but this must be read with care: Wright’s position differs from Dummett’s in crucial respects.

For a view in the philosophy of mind, with some similarities to Dummett’s (specifically, in the acceptance of something like the manifestation constraint), see the work of Christopher Peacocke, e.g., his *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1992).

**21 December**
