

PH 8105 Philosophy of Language

Winter 2018

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Office Hours: Tuesday, 3-4 (unless there is a department meeting) : Wednesday, 2:45-3:45 (or by appointment)

This course will examine language via readings that take up, in part, a metaphilosophical point of view. That is, instead of getting into the details of “pure” philosophy of language,” we will be asking anew Ian Hacking’s (1975) old question “Why does language matter to philosophy?” and, more normatively, “How ought language matter to philosophy?”.

For the first half of term we will read Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, starting at the beginning and getting as far as we can. Wittgenstein covers a lot of territory, including reflections on the conditions for the possibility of language.

For weeks 7-12 we will read Robert Brandom’s *Reason in Philosophy* (2009), and I will give some background lecture on prior magnum opus, *Making it Explicit* (1994). Brandom works out a normative conception of both language and philosophy. The central task of the latter is elucidating the commitments one undertakes in performing certain speech acts giving the normative standards implied.

Either the original Anscombe translation of *Philosophical Investigations* or the newer one amended by PMS Hacker is fine.

Each week I will post what the readings will be for the coming week. Sometimes I will have some introductory remarks. But much of the time I will ask students to explicate certain passages if they are willing to just to get discussion started.

Workload: There will be four (4) short explication assignments (2-3 pages) worth 12% each and an essay due near the end of term worth 50% (you get two free points).