

PHILO204-21A(FLEXI): Wisdom, Language, and Communication

Lectures: Tuesdays 16:10 - 17:00; Thursdays 15:10 - 16:00

Tutorial recitations: Fridays 15:10 - 16:00

Location: KG.09 & Zoom

Instructor: Joe Ulatowski

Office: J3.19A

Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:30 - 12:30

or by appointment (F2F and Zoom)

Required Texts

There is *no required text book for the course*, but there will be required readings. The required readings will be made available online using the **Talis reading list system** and in a course pack available for purchase through **Waikato Print**. The **list of readings** is available beginning on **p. 4** of this abbreviated syllabus.

Recommended Texts

There are many! Too many to list here, but the list is available on our course outline page. Please visit!

Course Description

Despite the cliché: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me," *expressions* have the capacity to harm. This course introduces students to the **political, social, and moral dimensions of what people say and the extent to which people harm others through what they say or what may be inferred from what they say**. Through the discussion and critical analysis of academic papers and nonacademic material, we explore how speech is connected with **moral wrongness, harm, liberty, resistance, and social justice**. We consider some contemporary topics in social epistemology and philosophy of language such as *lying, bullshitting, dogwhistling, grandstanding, misleading, and silencing*.

Here are some questions we will consider:

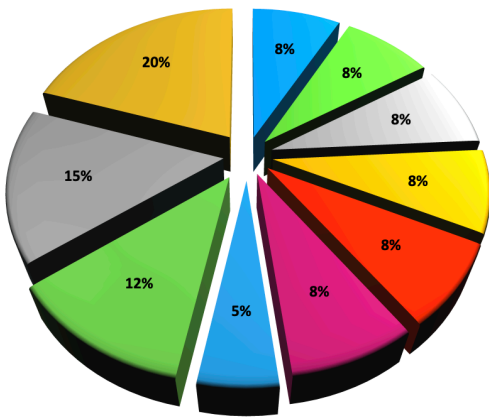
- How do we discriminate against others through what we say?
- How do we use language to demean, derogate, offend, and hurt other people based on their gender, sexual orientation, or ethnicity?
- What is the meaning of expressions that are conventionally used to offend others because of their gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic identification?
- Does the representation of gender and ethnicity in language influence our thinking?
- How ought we interpret cloaked language as a form of discrimination?

Students are required to read the assigned readings thoroughly and come to class prepared to discuss the reading(s). The more students engage with the materials, the more productive the course will be. No knowledge of the practice or history of philosophy is presupposed; curiosity is.

Course requirements

Wisdom, Language and Communication is a **FLEXI** course that adopts a **blended learning environment**, so content will be delivered **in-person** and **online**. While we will meet twice weekly for lecture in the classroom, some students will join us virtually. Tutorials will be offered **online asynchronously**. More information about tutorials will be shared online via **Moodle**.

Just as with all university courses, the burden of the work is shared equally between the student and the lecturer. Students should take responsibility of their education by engaging with the material, the lecturer, and with each other. To facilitate student learning we will employ the **Moodle Online** platform. Such a platform will permit the lecturer to alert the student of work that is coming due and to provide students with an additional opportunity to engage with the material for the course.



Visual representation of course requirements

Quiz (5%): The quiz will test one's knowledge and understanding of the **University's plagiarism policy**, as well as the policy adopted for this course which is in consonance with the spirit and letter of the University's policy, and the consequences students face if they choose to violate the policy. **Plagiarism**, very briefly, occurs when someone fails to give reasonable and appropriate credit or acknowledgment of an author or source of another person's original work, whether such work is made up of code, formulas, ideas, language, research, strategies writing or other form(s). By completing this quiz the student will gain an understanding and appreciation of **what plagiarism is, what counts as plagiarism, and what the student risks if the s/he commits plagiarism**. Because the student will have completed the plagiarism quiz the maximum sanction permitted by the University will be pursued if a student is caught plagiarising in this course.

Participation (12%): *Philosophy depends upon dialogue between discussants.* Because of this, an integral part of the PHILO 204 learning experience is in-class participation **with the lecturer** and **with fellow students**. For each lecture, students who participate in the in-class discussion will earn a mark for *high quality engagement* with the material. I will write down your name and a summary of your contribution every time you contribute to the classroom experience.

If past experience of in-class discussion is indicative of what will go on in this course, then very fine essay assignments will result from relatively terse comments made in discussion.

Short essays (48% total; 8% per essay): Students must submit 6 short essays and they should be submitted via Moodle by **8:00pm Thursday** (fortnightly). I must receive the assignment by the deadline. Late short essay submissions will not be accepted for any reason. Models of short essays are available on the Moodle page. For any student who submits all 6 short essays, their lowest mark will be dropped and replaced by their highest mark.

The format of a 300- to 500-word essay is similar to a short essay one may have had to submit in another course. Each paragraph should be about 75-125 words, and it consists of 3-5 well-written sentences.

The main components of a short essay should include:

- **Introduction paragraph that engages the reader and establishes the thesis.** The thesis may be a question that you will later answer in the essay content, or it can be a statement that you support in the body paragraphs.
- **2-3 body paragraphs that provide evidence to back up your thesis.** Each paragraph should be a cohesive element with an introduction and conclusion. The body paragraphs should flow well from one point to the next.
- **A concluding paragraph that reminds the reader of the thesis and highlights key points from the body text.** The conclusion should answer the question or complete the statement made in the introduction. It should give the reader a sense of closure and resolution.

Short essays need not be exactly 500 words, but they should be some length between 300 and 500 words. Write as much as you need to comprehensively address the prompt without frivolous content, but **do not go over the maximum word count of 500.**

Long essay plan (15%): Students should be sufficiently prepared to complete a long essay (3000 words), which is a longer and more detailed essay than the short essays. A philosophy essay should have an argument as its backbone. If there's no argument, then it's not philosophy. To prepare an argumentative essay appropriate for a philosophy course you should submit an essay plan, which will consist of the following:

1. In one sentence, answer the question: What is the topic of your essay?

3. In one-to-two sentences, answer the question: What is your main conclusion?
4. Name two articles or book chapters you have read, or plan to read, that you will consider and mention in your essay. Summarise what is said in each of these works, and indicate how they are relevant to your topic: one-to-three sentences should suffice. Example: Linda Zagzebski's 'Recovering Understanding' rejects the argument that understanding is a form of knowledge. This is relevant to my essay because . . .
5. Write a short outline of your planned essay. You may model this outline on the style we employ for weekly argument reconstructions, or you may use the standard model of outline employed elsewhere in the academy. (This can be up to one-full A4 page.)
6. An argumentative essay should consider potential objections or challenges that the position may face. So, in two-to-four sentences, answer the following questions: Do you have any doubts about your conclusion? What are they?
7. Philosophy essays are full of examples. Perhaps the clarity of your argument will be helped along by an illustration or thought experiment. So, provide one original example that you might employ in your essay which is relevant to your argument. (This can be two-to-five sentences.)
8. Finally, explain how this example is relevant to the argument of your essay. (1-2 sentences)

Students should use the constructive feedback received to improve the quality of the long essay. (More information about the essay plan will be distributed closer to the time it is due.)

Essay (30%): The student will be responsible for completing a **long essay** that must be no more than 3000 words (**strict maximum limit**). The long essay is due in Moodle by **5.00PM** on **4 June 2021**. For this essay, I will prepare a list of potential topics the student may address in the essay, but the student may want to recycle material from the short essays that they have submitted throughout the semester. Should the student wish to develop an idea for the essay assignment on their own, I request that the student schedule an office hour with me to discuss the topic. Late submissions will be processed without penalty for up to two weeks following the official submission deadline.

Course Schedule

Week	Week Beginning	Topics	Additional Information
1	Mon 1 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to social epistemology and philosophy of language 	<p>Required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Handout on analytic epistemology and philosophy of language of the 20C Orwell, George (1946). 'Politics and the English Language'. In <i>The Collected Essays, Journalism, and Letters of George Orwell</i>, Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus (eds.), pp. 127-140. New York: Harcourt Brace.
2	Mon 8 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to social epistemology and philosophy of language 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Austin, J.L. (1970). 'Performative Utterances' In <i>Philosophical Papers of J.L. Austin</i>, J.O. Urmson and G.J. Warnock (eds.), pp. 233-252. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
3	Mon 15 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduction to social epistemology and philosophy of language 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grice, H.P. (1989). 'Logic and Conversation' In <i>Studies in the Way of Words</i>, pp. 21-40. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.
4	Mon 22 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silencing, subordinating, and oppressive speech 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Langton, Rae (1993). 'Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts'. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 22(4): 293-330.
5	Mon 29 Mar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silencing, subordinating, and oppressive speech 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> McGowan, Mary Kate (2009). 'Oppressive Speech'. <i>Australasian Journal of Philosophy</i> 87(4): 389-407.
6	Mon 5 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free speech and its limits 	<p>Required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mill, John Stuart (1859/2004). <i>On Liberty</i>, chapter 2. Sitting Bull (1882). 'Prison Interview'
7	Mon 12 Apr	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Free speech and its limits 	<p>Required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tirrell, Lynne (2012). 'Geoncidal Language Games.' [In:] Mary Kate McGowan and Ishani Maitra (ed.), <i>Speech and Harm: Controversies Over Free Speech</i>. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 174-221. L. Susan Stebbing (1939/2007), 'Propaganda: An Obstacle' [in:] <i>Thinking to Some Purpose</i>. Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, pp. 62-72.
8	Mon 19 Apr	Teaching Recess Week	
9	Mon 26 Apr	Teaching Recess Week	

10	Mon 3 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Epistemologies of ignorance and the rise of polarisation 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dubois, W.E.B. (1935). 'The Propaganda of History.' [in:] <i>Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880</i>. New York: Russell & Russell, pp. 711-729.
11	Mon 10 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Epistemologies of ignorance and the rise of polarisation 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alcoff, Linda Martín (2007). 'Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types.' [In:] <i>Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance</i>, edited by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana, pp. 39-58. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
12	Mon 17 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polarisation, disagreement, and deceit 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nguyen, C. Thi (2020). "Echo Chambers and Epistemic Bubbles," <i>Episteme</i> 17(2): 141-161.
13	Mon 24 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polarisation, disagreement, and deceit 	<p>Required reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Saul, Jennifer (2018). 'Dogwhistles, Political Manipulation, and Philosophy of Language' [In:] <i>New Work on Speech Acts</i>, edited by Daniel Fogal, Daniel W. Harris, and Matt Moss, pp. 360-383. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
14	Mon 31 May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Polarisation, disagreement, and deceit 	<p>Required readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rini, Regina (2017). 'Fake News and Partisan Epistemology'. <i>Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal</i> 27.2: 43-64.
15	Mon 7 Jun	Study Week	
16	Mon 14 Jun	Exam Week	
17	Mon 21 Jun	Exam Week	