

Phil 490/500: Speech, Power, and Harm

Instructor: Dr. Audrey Yap (ayap@uvic.ca)

Office/Phone: CLE B307 (721-7510)

Office Hours: TWF: 10:00-11:00, and by appointment

Class Information: TWF 1:30-2:20 in CLE B315

Course Website: Through CourseSpaces.

Textbooks: *Speech and Harm*, edited by Ishani Maitra and Mary Kate McGowan.

Other readings available online. If you notice any accessibility issues with respect to the readings or course website, please let me know.

Course Content: Free speech is something that we value as a society—yet we also recognize that speech has the ability to affect others in negative ways. In this course, we are going to consider speech, along with other forms of discourse, as types of actions, and try to understand what some of the potential consequences of speech might be. Whether this ought to limit what we do with speech remains open, but in order to understand why we might want such limitations, or how otherwise to mitigate the potential harms of speech, we first need to see how it is possible for speech to harm. For instance, does the Trump administration’s language surrounding immigrants—calling some “animals” and describing them as “infesting the country”—smooth the way for things such as child detention facilities? What is the effect of the use of hate speech or racial slurs? In this course, we will look at how social philosophy and the philosophy of language intersect in helping us make sense of the complex ways in which language and power interact to shape our everyday lives.

You might at various points find some of the course material challenging — not just intellectually, but also emotionally, since we will be doing our best to talk about the realities of injustice in our society. I encourage all of you to be mindful of the variety of experiences and backgrounds of other students in the class, and to let me know if you have any concerns.

Communication: Office hours are held on a drop-in basis. You do not need to make an appointment to see me during those times, although the amount of time I can spend talking to any one person during office hours can depend on how many people are waiting. If you do want to schedule an appointment outside my office hours, try emailing me with a few suggestions for times that would work for you. I’m also happy to try and answer short questions either before or after class, time permitting. In general, email is my preferred method of communication, especially for any official requests. If you ask me a question over email, you can expect a reply within about 1 working day. If you don’t hear back from me after that time frame, feel free to try again in case your message went astray. When you do address me (over email or otherwise), please do so as either Professor (Prof.) Yap, or Dr. Yap. Please don’t use any of Mrs/Miss/Ms/Mr, for a variety of reasons. If you are ever nervous about sending me an email, or asking a question, feel free to include a picture of a puppy with your request. This will not affect whether or not I will be able to help you with your request, but will give you an excuse to look for pictures of puppies. Finally, my

pronouns are she/hers. If you think I am unlikely to know the name you would prefer to be called, or the pronouns I ought to use for you, through the entry that I will see for you through CourseSpaces/UVic registration, please don't hesitate to make me aware.

Course Logistics: I do not take official attendance, but I do expect you to come to class regularly. If you require any accommodations with respect to planned class activities, I encourage you to register with the Centre for Accessible Learning (<https://www.uvic.ca/services/cal/>). However, in general, please feel free to talk to me if there are issues with your access to this course that you think I should know about.

60% of the grade for this course will be determined by a final research paper (12-14 pages for undergrads, 14-16 for grads), due after the end of classes. This will be written on a topic of your choice, double-spaced, with page numbers, using any standard citation format (see <http://library.uvic.ca/instruction/cite/> for help). A paper proposal, in the form of an extended outline (1-2 pages) for this paper will be due on the last week of class, 10 days prior to the due date for the paper itself. You will also be presenting the proposal during the last weeks of class. The proposal and its presentation will be worth 6% of your grade, and I encourage you to discuss paper topics with me before the proposal is due.

I expect the final paper to engage with the main topics of speech, power, and harm, using at least two of the works on it that we will have read throughout the term. You are welcome to bring in other readings on the subject as well. This paper will not necessarily have to argue for one philosopher's view over another, but could, for example, talk about ways in which the concepts under discussion could be fruitfully extended or applied in various domains. You are also encouraged to think about ameliorative strategies, and ways that we could find structural solutions for the problems raised by the authors we are reading.

You will also write 3 short critical response papers (3-5 pages double-spaced), each worth 8%. At least 5 sets of topics for these courses will be posted, but it will be up to you which 3 you choose. Normally, students will only be allowed to write 3 papers, all of which will be counted. The main criterion for these short papers will be clarity and accuracy. I will be looking at how clearly and carefully you represent the main arguments and how well you identify which aspects of them are important for the points you are trying to make. Staying close to the assigned length will also be taken into consideration when grading. The following corresponds to a rough guide for the grading scale I will use for these papers:

7 - 8: Excellent explanations and discussion that focusses on the most relevant concepts, within the allotted space. Treatment of the arguments is thorough, but concise.

6 - 7: Good explanations and discussion that address the relevant concepts, giving a good idea of the paper's subject matter. Gives the basic outline of the arguments. May not be within the allotted space.

5 - 6: Relevant concepts and arguments are addressed and outlined. Work is appropriate

and acceptable, but lacking in clarity, precision, focus, or use of space.

4 - 5: Some, but not all, of the relevant concepts and arguments are addressed and outlined. Work is lacking in more than one area, but addresses several of the basic required points. Below 4: Work is not acceptable.

The remaining 10% of your grade will be for a journal that you will keep throughout the semester. It must have at least ten entries over the course of the semester, with one entry per week, graded on a pass/fail basis, where a pass displays genuine engagement with the course material. Entries only need to be a page long, double-spaced; they can discuss your thoughts on some of the readings, or they can talk about ways in which you have thought about the concepts under discussion and their relationship to ordinary life. Since I will not formally take attendance, the journal will serve the function of an attendance mark by ensuring that you are keeping up with the readings and paying attention to class discussions.

Please note that all work handed in will be subject to the University of Victoria's policy on Academic Integrity, which can be accessed at this link: <http://web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html> Please consult this resource if you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism or the unauthorized use of an editor. While you are highly encouraged to discuss your work with other students, and give each other constructive feedback, editing of other student's work is in violation of university policy.

Numbers will be converted to a letter grade in accordance with the following scale:
90-100 = A+; 85-89 = A; 80-84 = A-; 77-79 = B+; 73-76 = B; 70-72 = B-; 65-69 = C+; 60-64 = C; 50-59 = D; 0-49 = F.

Grade Breakdown Summary:

Assignment	Percentage Value	Due Date
Journal entries x 10	1% x 8 = 10%	Weekly
Critical response papers x 3	8% x 3 = 24%	Varies by topic
Paper proposal and presentation	6%	Dec 4, and as scheduled
Final paper	60%	Dec 14

Schedule of Readings:

A note about content: The readings in this class cover issues of violence and oppression. Some of them will mention slurs, hateful propaganda, descriptions of historical and present atrocities, and other potentially upsetting material. I hope that you will be able to engage with the material productively nevertheless. If you find this material affecting you adversely, you are more than welcome to speak to me privately about your concerns, and if I am not the best person to help you with them, I will do my best to help you find a more appropriate source of support, such as our mental health resources on campus (<http://www.uvic.ca/services/counselling/home/contact/index.php>).

- Week One: Sept 5, 7
Readings: Foreword and Introduction, *Speech and Harm* (SH)
- Week Two: Sep 11, 12, 14
Topic: Speech Acts and Subordination
Readings: Selections from J.L. Austin, *Doing Things with Words*
Rae Langton, “Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts”
- Week Three: Sep 18, 19, 21
Topic: Speech Acts and Hate Speech
Readings: Mary Kate McGowan, “On ‘Whites Only’ Signs and Racist Hate Speech: Verbal Acts of Racial Discrimination” (SH)
Caroline West, “Words That Silence? Freedom of Expression and Racist Hate Speech” (SH)
- Week Four: Sep 25, 26, 28
Topic: Pragmatics and Subordination
Readings: David Lewis, “Scorekeeping in a Language Game”
Rae Langton, “Beyond Belief: Pragmatics in Hate Speech and Pornography” (SH)
- Week Five: Oct 2, 3, 5
Topic: Pragmatics and Subordination
Readings: Nancy Bauer, “How to Do Things with Pornography”
Ishani Maitra, “Subordinating Speech” (SH)
- Week Six: Oct 9, 10, 12
Topic: Slurs
Readings: Lauren Ashwell, “Gendered Slurs”
Luvell Anderson and Ernie Lepore, “Slurring Words”
Listenings: Luvell Anderson the the UnMute Podcast about Slurs

- Week Seven: Oct 16, 17, 19
 Topic: Immigration Rhetoric
 Readings: Selections from Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*
- Week Eight: Oct 23, 24, 26
 Topic: Speech and Atrocity
 Readings: Selections from Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*
 Lynne Tirell, “Genocidal Language Games” (SH)
- Week Nine: Oct 30, 31, Nov 2
 Topic: Speech and Atrocity
 Readings: Andrew Altman, “Freedom of Expression and Human Rights Law: The Case of Holocaust Denial” (SH)
 Selections from David Livingstone Smith, *Less Than Human*
 Listenings: David Livingstone Smith on the UnMute Podcast about Dehumanization.
- Week Ten: Nov 6, 7, 9
 Topics: Silencing
 Readings: Kristie Dotson, “Tracking Epistemic Violence: Tracking Practices of Silencing”
 Miranda Fricker, “Silence and Institutional Prejudice”
 Listenings: Kristie Dotson on the UnMute Podcast about The Problem of Ignorance
- Week Eleven: Nov 16
 Topics: Academic Freedom
 Readings: Selections from J.S. Mill, *On Liberty*
 Other online resources.
- Week Twelve: Nov 20, 21, 23
 Topics: Reclaiming Language
 Readings: Cassie Herbert, “Precarious Projects: The Performative Structure of Reclamation”
 T’lat’lakul Patricia Rosborough and cuucqa Layla Rorick, “Following in the footsteps of the wolf: connecting scholarly minds to ancestors in Indigenous language revitalization”
 Listenings: Cassie Herbert on the UnMute Podcast on Risky Speech
- Week Thirteen: Nov 27, 28, 30
 Topic: Public Resistance, Proposal Drafts
 Readings: Laura Beth Nielsen, “Power in Public: Reactions, Responses, and Resistance to Offensive Public Speech” (SH)

- Week Fourteen: Dec 4, 5

Readings: The Class, Your Paper Proposal Drafts.

Paper Proposals due Dec 4th.

Final Papers Due Dec 14th.