

PHIL 354: Philosophy of Language (1.5 units)

Course Information:

PHIL 354 A01 (CRN 22476)

Course Schedule: TWF 11:30-12:20 in ELL 160

Prerequisites: 4.5 units of philosophy.

Instructor Information:

Name: Dr. Audrey Yap (she/they) (you can call me Dr. Yap, Professor Yap, or Audrey)

Email: ayap@uvic.ca

Office: CLE B307

Appointments: In-person drop-in hours Fridays 12:30-1:20 or schedule a Zoom appointment with me on Thursdays between 9-11 at <https://calendly.com/ayap/office>

If those options don't work for you, please email me with some suggested dates and times.

Territorial Acknowledgement (Contributed by Scow and Underwood):

The University of Victoria is situated on the unceded territory of the lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ peoples. This is their land—a reality that all of us who have come here must acknowledge. We must also recognize how our presence here interrupts ancient ways of being in this world. We all have a responsibility to prevent further intrusion into lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ lives and, if called upon, to support expressions of lək'wəŋən and W̱SÁNEĆ nationhood. We must also recognize that we are living on someone's home—spread across Greater Victoria are the hunting and fishing grounds, village sites and ceremonial places of Salish people, and we must acknowledge how our presence here can either disrupt or repair the relationships between the original people and their territory.

Course Logistics and Technologies:

Course website and all readings posted on Brightspace (<https://bright.uvic.ca/d2l/home>)

While course will be taught face-to-face, all assignments will be turned in through the course website, and lecture components of each week's instruction will be recorded and posted. In-class activities including class discussion will not be recorded. Philosophy isn't just something you learn by listening to a professor talk about it, or by reading a book, it's also something you need to *do*. As a result, your classes are going to be structured with a mixture of activities in mind. You can expect some classes to have more lecture-style content, while others will involve activities like small group discussion, depending on what our goals for that particular week might be.

Learning Objectives and Strategies:

The philosophy of language is a wide-ranging area covering many issues, including meaning, truth, presupposition, context, and reference, but also has a range of applications to how we actually communicate with each other and operate in the world. This class will introduce some commonly used frameworks and ideas in the philosophy of language, such

as speech act theory, presupposition, and common ground. We will then see how philosophers have applied those ideas to the ways that language functions in the world.

As a result, while the topics for the first six weeks are set, the topics for the last six weeks will be decided by a(n anonymous) poll on Brightspace that will be open until January 31st. You will be given a list of ten possible topics to choose from and will be allowed to choose up to six to cover during the term. These topics will be set for the last six weeks. You can find the list of possible topics and readings at the end of the course outline after the course schedule.

This class will be a non-exhaustive survey of topics in the philosophy of language. My goal as your instructor is to help you achieve the following learning objectives during this semester together:

- Familiarity with a variety of philosophical positions in the philosophy of language and several applications.
- The ability to understand and clearly explain philosophical ideas and arguments.
- The ability to apply and evaluate the application of philosophical frameworks to the world.

Assessment:

There will be two midterm assignments, each worth 25% of your grade, and a final assignment worth 40%. The remaining 10% will be based on regular engagement with the class material.

Engagement:

Each week you'll have the opportunity to earn an engagement point. Earning 10 of these points will get you full marks for engagement, which means that missing a few weeks will not negatively impact your grade. The activities that will earn you an engagement mark each week might vary from asynchronous commenting on a reading or participation in a class activity. The objective for this is continuing engagement in the class, so **no extensions on engagement marks** will be given. However, you will have 12 opportunities to gain engagement points, which means that you can miss 2 with no penalty.

Assignments:

The midterm and final assignments will all be take-home and open book work. At least two weeks before the submission deadline, the assignment questions will be released. Assignment questions will typically take the form of essays where you will be asked to outline and apply the ideas we have been learning about. There will also be some creative assignment options given, where you might choose to report on your experiences trying to apply something that we have discussed in your own life.

Essays for the midterm assignments will be approximately 1000-1250 words or 4-5 double spaced pages. Essays for the final assignment will be approximately 2000-2250 words or 8-10 pages.

However, I know that sometimes things do not go as planned. You may have **3 days' worth of extensions on assignments**, to be distributed among the assignments as you like. Please let me know before the due date if you are using an extension, and how long an extension you need, though you do not need to tell me why you need it. If you end up needing more than 3 days' worth of extensions during the semester, I highly encourage you to make an appointment with me to talk about how we can plan for you to keep up with the course schedule.

Completing at least one midterm as well as the final assignment means that you will be considered to have **completed the course**. If you do not turn in at least this amount of work, this will result in an N grade regardless of the cumulative percentage on other elements of the course.

Gradeable Item	Description	Value	Total
Engagement	Continuing engagement with the material, assessed weekly	1% x 10 weeks	10%
Midterm Assignments	Short essays or creative projects about the readings	25% x 2 assignments	50%
Final Assignment	Medium length essay or creative project about the readings	40%	40%
		Total	100%

Final course grades will be given as percentile marks, in accordance with the standard university grading scheme:

<https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/S1AAgoGuV?bc=true&bcCurrent=16%20-%20Grading&bcGroup=Undergraduate%20Academic%20Regulations&bcItemType=policies>.

Academic Integrity:

You are welcome and encouraged to talk to others about your assignments. They are also entirely open book, which means you can consult any past lectures, notes, or course material, with the understanding that you are ultimately responsible for all the content that you submit. You do not need to cite lectures, but you do need to cite readings. You may not, however, use generative AI for this class, and its use is a violation of academic integrity. More importantly, using it will not actually help you learn the skills we're working on. If there is something you genuinely think you would need it for, I'd encourage you instead to come talk to me about how the course could be more accessible for you.

I teach this course under the assumption that you are here to learn. If you are having trouble with the material, then my expectation is that you will ask me for help or for an extension instead of using a generative AI tool.

You can find UVic's policy on Academic Integrity here:

https://www.uvic.ca/calendar/future/undergrad/index.php#/policy/Sk_0xsM_V

Conduct and Communication:

I do not run a formal classroom and I do not insist on titles. You can refer to me as Dr. Yap, Professor Yap, or Audrey, and I genuinely have no preference which you use. She and they are both correct pronouns for me, and if you think I wouldn't know which pronouns you use, please don't hesitate to make me aware.

Email is the best way to get in touch with me outside of class time, particularly if you have 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. If you are nervous about sending me an email or asking a question, feel free to include a picture of a puppy (or cute animal of your choice) with your request. This will not affect whether I will be able to help you with your request but will give you an excuse to look for pictures of puppies or other cute creatures. In fact, it will make me happy to know that you have read the course outline to this point, so feel free to send me a picture of a cute animal now.

I also consider you to be the best authority on your needs in the classroom. That means if you need to do things like eat or drink during class, leave the room, knit, stim, or anything else, the only thing I ask is that you respect others in the room and try not to distract them.

Course Schedule:

Week One: Jan 7, 8, 10

Topic: Introductions. Are We Doing Philosophy of Language Right Now?

Reading: Andrea Sullivan-Clarke "Relations and How Decolonial Allies Acknowledge Land"

Week Two: Jan 14, 15, 17

Topic: Speech Acts

Reading: J.L. Austin *How to Do Things With Words*, Lectures I-IV

Week Three: Jan 21, 22, 24

Topic: Speech Acts

Reading: J.L. Austin *How to Do Things With Words*, Lectures VIII-X

Week Four: Jan 28, 29, 31

Topic: Language Games

Reading: Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* 1-38

Marie McGinn, "Wittgenstein's Critique of Augustine"

Week Five: Feb 4, 5, 7

Topic: Presupposition and Common Ground

Reading: David Lewis, "Scorekeeping in a Language Game"
Sally Haslanger, "Ideology, Generics, and Common Ground"

Week Six: Feb 11, 12, 14

Topic: Pragmatism, Pragmatics, and Discourse

Reading: Mark Lance and Quill (writing as Rebecca) Kukla, "Leave the Gun; Take the Cannoli! The Pragmatic Topography of Second-Person Calls"

Assignment One due Feb 16

Reading Break: Feb 17-21

Week Seven: Feb 25, 26, 28

Week Eight: Mar 4, 5, 7

Week Nine: Mar 11, 12, 14

Assignment Two due Mar 16

Week Ten: Mar 18, 19, 21

Week Eleven: Mar 25, 26, 28

Week Twelve: Apr 1, 2, 4

Final Assignment Due Apr 13

Optional Topics:

Topic: Analyticity

Readings: Gillian Russell, *Truth in Virtue of Meaning*, Chap 1
Cory Juhl and Eric Loomis, "Analytic Truth"

Topic: Bullshit

Readings: Harry Frankfurt, excerpts from *On Bullshit*
Michael Townsen Hicks, James Humpries, Joe Slater, "ChatGPT is Bullshit"

Topic: Counterspeech

Readings: Daisy Dixon, "Artistic (Counter) Speech"

Ten-Herng Lai, "Political vandalism as counter-speech: A defense of defacing and destroying tainted monuments"

Topic: Ethical Issues in Language Preservation

Readings: Ethan Nowak, "Language Extinction"

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner, "Laxwalxwash Potamáay Súngaan 'áawq // to be between the Blind Snake's Teeth"

Topic: Hate Speech and Genocide

Readings: Lynne Tirrell, "Genocidal Language Games"

Topic: Language and Thought

Readings: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Body as Expression, and Speech"

Topic: Sex and Consent

Readings: Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa, "Presupposition and Consent"

Quill Kukla, "That's What She Said: The Language of Sexual Negotiation"

Topic: Slurs

Readings: Rae Langton, Sally Haslanger, and Luvel Anderson, "Language and Race"

Elisabeth Camp, "A Dual Act Analysis of Slurs"

Topic: Silencing

Readings: Kristie Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Practices of Silencing"

Anna Klieber, "Silencing Conversational Silences"

Topic: Talking about Fiction

Readings: Amie Thomasson, "Speaking of Fictional Characters"

Stacie Friend, "The great beetle debate: a study in imagining with names"

Other Resources:

Student Resources

- a. [UVic Learn Anywhere](#). UVic Learn Anywhere is the primary learning resource for students that offers many learning workshops and resources to help students with academics and learning strategies.
- b. [Library resources](#). Information for students wishing to use the UVic library.
- c. [Student wellness resources](#)
- d. [Ombudsperson](#) A resource to help resolve disputes or complaints.
- e. Indigenous student services ([ISS](#))
- f. Centre for Academic Communication ([CAC](#))
- g. Math & Stats Assistance Centre ([MSAC](#))
- h. Learning Strategies Program ([LSP](#))
- i. [Other student groups and resources](#)
- j. [Academic Concession Regulations](#)
- k. [Academic Concession and Accommodation](#)
- l. Academic accommodation & access for students with disabilities – [Policy AC1205](#)

University statements and policies

- a. University Calendar - Section "[Information for all students](#)"
- b. [Creating a respectful, inclusive and productive learning environment](#)
- c. [Accommodation of Religious Observance](#)
- d. [Student Conduct](#)
- e. [Non-academic Student Misconduct](#)
- f. [Accessibility](#)
- g. [Diversity / EDI](#)
- h. [Equity statement](#)
- i. [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response](#)
- j. Discrimination and Harassment [Policy](#)