

Syllabus: Semantics versus Pragmatics: Derogatory Speech

Teoretisk Filosofi, Magisterkurs, Stockholm Universitet

COURSE DESCRIPTION

What aspects of linguistic meaning belong to semantics and what aspects belong to pragmatics remains a controversial question. The objective in this course is to address this question by considering a comparatively small but currently widely studied aspect of natural language, namely slurs and other kinds of derogatory speech. We begin by covering some foundational topics in pragmatics and then move on to consider a range of recent analyses of slurs. We will be particularly concerned with the following questions:

- (a) Can a plausible theory of slurs be constructed using already familiar semantic and/or pragmatic resources?
- (b) Will such a theory fit with a standard distinction between semantics and pragmatics?

In the second part of the course, we will turn our attention to a different and slightly more subtle kind of derogatory speech, namely racial and gender generics. Our main focus will be on determining what a plausible theory of generic statements must look like, but we will also touch on certain normative issues, e.g. whether racial and gender generics are inherently problematic and therefore ought to never be used.

INSTRUCTOR / CONTACT

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LOCATION/TIME/OFFICE HOURS

Location: D734, Södra huset hus D
Time: Tuesdays 13-15, Wednesdays 13-15.
Office Hours: Tuesdays 10-12

COURSE FORMAT

This class will be a mix of lectures and class discussion. Each class will focus on roughly two key papers which will be discussed in detail. Students are expected to have read the relevant papers before each class and have prepared discussion questions.

EXAMINATION

Students are required to submit a 5000 word paper by the end of term on a topic related to the topics of the course (subject to approval by the instructor). Students are encouraged to come up with their own questions/topics for their paper, but suggestions will be provided during the course. Papers may be written in English or Swedish.

SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC	READINGS
6/11	Background: Speech Acts	J. L. Austin (1979)
12/11	Background: Implicatures	H. P. Grice (1989)
19/11	Background: Presupposition and Projection	Beaver & Geurts (2011) Simons et. al. (2011)
21/11	Slurs and Pejoratives Slurs as Literal Meaning	Hom (2012) Pullum (2016)
27/11	Slurs and Pejoratives Slurs as Conventional Implicatures	Williamson (2009) Whiting (2013)
3/12	Slurs and Pejoratives Expressivism and Dual Act Analysis	Elizabeth Camp (2018) Richard (2018)
10/12	Slurs and Pejoratives Slurs as Conversational Implicatures	Nunberg (2018)
11/12	Generics Generalization, Bias, and Prejudice	Leslie & Learner (2016) Leslie (2018)

READING LIST

- JOHN L. AUSTIN (1979). *Performative Utterances*. In *Philosophical Papers*, Oxford University Press. pp.233-252.
- DAVID BEAVER & BART GEURTS (2011). *Presupposition*. Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/presupposition/>
- ELIZABETH CAMP (2018). A Dual-Act Analysis of Slurs. In *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*. Oxford University Press. pp. 29-60.
- H. PAUL GRICE (1989). *Logic and Conversation*. In *Studies in The Way of Words*. Harvard University Press, pp. 22-41.

- CHRISTOPHER HOM (2012). *A Puzzle about Pejoratives*. *Philosophical Studies* vol. 159, no. 3, pp. 383-405.
- SARAH-JANE LESLIE AND ADAM LERNER (2016). *Generic Generalizations*. Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/generics/>
- SARAH-JANE LESLIE (2018). *The Original Sin of Cognition: Fear, Prejudice and Generalization*. *The Journal of Philosophy* vol.CXIV, no. 8, pp. 393-421.
- GEOFFREY NUNBERG (2018). *The Social Life of Slurs*. In *New Work on Speech Acts*. Oxford University Press. pp. 237-296.
- GEOFFREY PULLUM (2018). *Slurs and Obscenities*. In *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*. Oxford University Press. pp. 168-193.
- MARK RICHARD (2018). *How Do Slurs Mean?*. In *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*. Oxford University Press. pp. 155-168.
- KATHERINE RITCHIE (2019). *Should We Use Racial and Gender Generics?*. *Thought* (online first). pp. 1-9.
- JENNIFER SAUL (2017). *Are Generics Especially Pernicious?* *Inquiry* (online first). pp. 1-18.
- MANDY SIMONS, JUDITH TONHAUSER, DAVID BEAVER, AND CRAIG ROBERTS (2011). *What Projects and Why*. In *Proceedings of SALT*, vol. 20, pp. 309-327.
- DANIEL WHITING (2013). *It's not what you said, it's the way you said it*. *Slurs and Conventional Implicatures*. *Analytic Philosophy* vol. 54, no. 3 September. pp. 364-377.
- TIMOTHY WILLIAMSON (2009). *Reference, Inference and the Semantics of Pejoratives*. In *The Philosophy of David Kaplan*. Oxford University Press. pp. 137-159.