

# TOPICS IN PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE

## LINGUISTICS AND PHILOSOPHY OF PEJORATIVE LANGUAGE

Fall 2021

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<b>Office:</b>	*223 1879 Hall, Princeton †106 Somerset St– 511, Rutgers	<b>Office hours:</b>	By appointment
<b>Class Time &amp; Location:</b>	Mondays 5pm-7:50pm 201 Marx/106 Somerset St	<b>Course website:</b>	<a href="#">Canvas Site</a>

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### Course Description

Pejorative language provides powerful linguistic weapons. It is prone to provoke an offensive sting, but what is the nature and source of this offense? The predominant assumption has been that pejorative language is offensive because of some aspect of meaning—either semantically encoded or pragmatically conveyed. Those who reject this assumption locate the source of offense in the taboo status of pejorative language. In this seminar, we will reconsider and challenge both the views endorsing the predominant assumption, and their extant competitor, and defend an alternative: the source of a pejorative effect is neither meaning nor even language.

### Prerequisites:

We shall *not* assume prior familiarity with the details of contemporary semantic and pragmatic theories.

### Meeting Schedule

Our first session will be on Monday, September 13th at 201 Marx, in Princeton. We will also post an introductory (asynchronous) video for the seminar a week before that, on Tuesday, September 7th. Starting September 13th, we shall be meeting at Princeton and Rutgers, on alternate weeks.

For students who do not want to travel on alternate weeks we will have synchronous Zoom available.

## Required Readings

- All readings will be made available on our course's website.

## Course Requirements

- Rutgers students taking the course for credit should write a term paper by the end of the term.
- Princeton students wishing to receive a written unit in connection with the course should likewise write a final paper.
- All students are expected to attend, and participate in, the seminar.

## Topics and Possible Readings (subject to change)

### Topic I: Predicative Accounts

- Main reading:
  - Hom C. "The Semantics of Racial Epithets," *Journal of Philosophy*, 2008
- Additional readings:
  - Hom C., "A Puzzle About Pejoratives," *Philosophical Studies*, 2012
  - Hom C. and May R., "Moral and Semantic Innocence," *Analytic Philosophy*, 2013
  - Hom C. and May R., "Pejoratives as Fiction," in D. Sosa, ed., *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018
  - Neufeld E., "An Essentialist Theory of the Meaning of Slurs," *Philosophers' Imprint*, 2019

### Topic II: Presuppositional Accounts

- Main reading:
  - Schlenker P., "Expressive Presuppositions," *Theoretical Linguistics*, 2007
- Additional readings:
  - Cepollaro B. and Stojanovic I., "Hybrid Evaluatives," *Grazer Philosophische Studien*

### Topic III: Conventional Implicature Accounts

- Main reading:

- Williamson T., “Reference, Inference and Semantics of Pejoratives,” j. Almong R, and P. Leonardi, *The Philosophy of David Kaplan*, OUP, 2009

- Additional readings:

- Potts C., *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*, OUP, 2005 (excerpts)
- Bach, K., “The Myth of Conventional Implicature,” *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 1999

#### **Topic IV: Expressivist Accounts**

- Main reading:

- Potts C., “Expressive Dimension,” *Theoretical Linguistics*, 2007

- Additional readings:

- McCready E., “Varieties of Conventional Implicature,” *Semantics & Pragmatics*, 2013
- Jeshion R., “Expressivism and the Offensiveness of Slurs,” *Philosophical Perspectives*, 2013
- Bach K., “Loaded Words,” in D. Sosa, ed., *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018

#### **Topic V: Perspectival Accounts**

- Main reading:

- Camp E., “Slurring Perspectives,” *Analytic Philosophy*, 2013

- Additional readings:

- Jeshion R., “Slurs and Stereotypes,” *Analytic Philosophy*, 2013
- Camp, E., “A Dual Act Analysis of Slurs,” in D. Sosa, *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018
- Kirk-Giannini, C. D., “Slurs are directives,” *Philosophers’ Imprint*, 2019

#### **Topic VI: Pure Pragmatic Accounts**

- Main reading:

- Bolinger R., “The Pragmatics of Slurs” *Noûs*, 2017

- Additional readings:

- Nunberg G., “The Social Life of Slurs,” in D. Harris, D. Fogal, and M. Moss, *New Work on Speech Acts*, OUP, 2018

#### **Topic VII: Prohibitionism**

- Main reading:

- Anderson L. and Lepore E., “Slurring Words,” *Noûs*, 2013

- Additional readings:
  - Anderson L. and Lepore E., “What Did You Call Me? Slurs as Prohibited Words,” *Analytic Philosophy*, 2013

### **Topic VIII: Pejorative Tone Account**

- Main reading:
  - Lepore E. and Stone M., “Pejorative Tone,” in D. Sosa, ed., *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018
- Additional readings:
  - Diaz-Legaspe J., Liu C., and Stainton R., “Slurs and Register: a Case Study in Meaning Pluralism” *Mind and Language*, 2020

### **Topic IX: The Articulation Account**

- Main reading:
  - Stojnić U. and Lepore E., “Inescapable Articulations: Vessels of Lexical Effects,” *Noûs*, 2021
- Additional readings:
  - Stojnić U., “Just Words: Intentions, Tolerance, and Lexical Selection,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 2021
  - Stojnić U. and Lepore E., “Slurring Words and Slurring Articulations,” in L. Anderson and E. Lepore (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Philosophy of Language*, OUP, forthcoming.

### **Topic X: Reclamation**

- Main reading:
  - Stojnić U. and Lepore E., “Inescapable Articulations: Vessels of Lexical Effects,” *Noûs*, 2021
  - Bianchi C., “Slurs and Appropriation: An Echoic Account,” *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2014