Course Description

It is commonplace to speak of successful linguistic exchanges among interlocutors as requiring shared knowledge of meaning. Speakers utter what they do on the presumption that they and their hearers share (transparent) knowledge of what their utterances mean. One problem with this common wisdom is that there is also a general consensus that for many (maybe all?) words, their successful use is based almost solely on some sort of deference, which suggests little (non-trivial) semantic knowledge (if any) is required for their successful use.

This course is an attempt to square this wisdom with this consensus; viz., how can a community of speakers in a network of deference succeed in informing each other with their words, in a way that allows them to manipulate the world—if they do not—or might not—know what these words mean? That is, how is it possible for interlocutors to exchange information and manipulate the world by using expressions whose meanings are accessible, not through (semantic) knowledge, but, rather, through a practice of deference to a linguistic community (or more directly, to whomever interlocutors have learned the words from)? After all, deference denies (non-trivial) knowledge of meaning is required for every successful use of language, and so, its proponents owe us a story about what, if not knowledge of meaning, underwrites and motivates successful linguistic usage and the informed exchanges that arise in cases where deference is in play.

Required Readings

- All readings will be made available on our course’s Blackboard Site.
Possible Readings (subject to change)

Week 01, 09/16 - 09/20: Introduction.
- (No advance readings required.)

Week 02, 09/23 - 09/27: Expressions and their Articulations: The Case of Names.
- Kaplan D. “Afterthoughts” (excerpts).
- **primary reading**: Evans G., “Causal Theory of Names”.

Week 03, 09/30 - 10/04: No Class!

Week 04, 10/07 - 10/11: Predicates and Their Articulations and Extensions

Week 05, 10/14 - 10/18: What’s a Word, Anyway?

Week 06, 10/21 - 10/25: Wither communication and understanding?

Week 07, 10/28 - 11/01: Fall Recess!
**Week 08, 11/04 - 11/08:** Sollipsistic Semantics


**Week 09, 11/11 - 11/15:** Compositionality


**Week 10, 11/18 - 11/22:** Analyticity


**Week 11, 11/25 - 11/29:** (Non)negotiable Meanings: Metalinguistic Negotiation, Conceptual Engineering


**Week 12, 12/02 - 12/06:** Metalinguistic Negotiation and Conceptual Engineering

Week 13, 12/09 - 12/13: Communication and Inquiry
