Topics in Philosophy of Language
Linguistics and Philosophy of Pejorative Language
Fall 2021

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Class Time & Location: Mondays
5pm-7:50pm
201 Marx/106 Somerset St
Course website: Canvas Site

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:
- Additional readings:
  - Hom C. and May R., “Pejoratives as Fiction,” in D. Sosa, ed., *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018

**Topic II: Presuppositional Accounts**

- Main reading:
- Additional readings:
  - Cepollaro B. and Stojanovic I., “Hybrid Evaluatives,” *Grazer Philosophische Studien*

**Topic III: Conventional Implicature Accounts**

- Main reading:
• Additional readings:
  – Potts C., *The Logic of Conventional Implicatures*, OUP, 2005 (excerpts)

**Topic IV: Expressivist Accounts**

• Main reading:

• Additional readings:
  – Bach K., “Loaded Words,” in D. Sosa, ed., *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018

**Topic V: Perspectival Accounts**

• Main reading:

• Additional readings:
  – Camp, E., “A Dual Act Analysis of Slurs,” in D. Sosa, *Bad Words: Philosophical Perspectives on Slurs*, OUP, 2018

**Topic VI: Pure Pragmatic Accounts**

• Main reading:

• Additional readings:

**Topic VII: Prohibitionism**

• Main reading:
• Additional readings:

**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:

**Topic IX: The Articulation Account**

• Main reading:

• Additional readings:

**Topic X: Reclamation**

• Main reading: