

# Problems of Intentionality

First Year Seminar, Fall 2010

University of Texas, Austin

Department of Philosophy

## INSTRUCTORS

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**Course Overview:** This course will be a research seminar on foundational issues concerning mental and linguistic representation. Issues to be discussed include, but are not limited to, the following:

- What is the explanatory and predictive role of representational contents in folk psychology?
- What must the contents of our thoughts, and speech acts, be like if they are to play these roles?
- More generally, how is representation so much as possible? What are the facts in virtue of which a thing – be it a neurophysiological state of a creature, or a bit of language – come to have representational properties in the first place?
- What is the relation between mental and linguistic content? Can the latter be accounted for in terms of the former?

Many of these issues were intensely debated by the leading philosophers in the 1970s and 80s, including Dennett, Stalnaker, Lewis, Field, Schiffer, Stich, and Kripke(nstein). The debate appeared to have died down for some time in the 90s, not on account of any solutions having been agreed upon, but more likely on account of a better appreciation of how daunting the problems were. Many, if not most, philosophers of mind and language subsequently turned their attention to ostensibly more tractable areas of research, such as empirically informed cognitive science and linguistics. In this course, we will optimistically revisit these issues with the hope of gaining a better understanding of the depths of the problems concerning mental and linguistic representation, as well as the space of possible solutions to these problems.

## **Grades and Required Readings**

Grading Policy: Students will be responsible for one substantive term paper worth 90% of the final grade for the course; the other 10% of the grade for the course being determined by one in-class oral presentation (5%) and preparation for and participation during class meetings (5%).

Readings: all required and supplemental readings will be posted on the Blackboard site for the course.

## CALENDAR OF READINGS (changes can be made as the interests of the class dictate)

Week 1, August 31<sup>st</sup>

- Stalnaker, *Inquiry*, ch.1

Week 2, September 7<sup>th</sup>

- Stalnaker, *Inquiry*, chs. 4 and 5
- Field's critical notice of *Inquiry*
- Student Presentation: pp. 439-450 of Speaks "Is Mental Content Prior to Linguistic Meaning?"

Week 3, September 14<sup>th</sup>

- Field, "Mental Representation" w/Postscript
- Schiffer, "Intentionality and the Language of Thought"
- Student Presentation: Stalnaker, *Inquiry*, ch. 2

Week 4: September 21<sup>st</sup>

- David Lewis, "Reduction of Mind"
- Student Presentation : Dennett, "True Believers"
- Optional: Byrne, "Interpretivism"

Week 5, September 28<sup>th</sup>

- Lewis, "Languages and Language"
- Schiffer, "Actual Language Relations"
- Student Presentation: Burge "On Knowledge and Convention"

Week 6, October 5<sup>th</sup>

- Field, "Deflationary Views of Meaning and Content", w/ Postscript
- Buchanan, "Are Truth and Reference Quasi-Disquotational?"
- Student Presentation: Stich, "What is a Theory of Mental Representation?"

Week 7, October 12<sup>th</sup>

- Schiffer, "Propositional Content"
- Student Presentation: Richard, "Propositional Attitudes"

Week 8, October 19<sup>th</sup>

- Buchanan, "Is Belief a Propositional Attitude?"
- Student Presentation: Bach, K. "Do Belief Reports Report Beliefs?"

Week 9, October 26<sup>th</sup>

- Stich, selections from *From Folk Psychology to Cognitive Science: The Case Against Belief*

Week 10, November 2<sup>nd</sup>

- Field, "Attributions of Meaning and Content"
- Student Presentation: Quine, *The Pursuit of Truth*, chs. 2 and 3

Week 11, November 9<sup>th</sup>

- Schiffer, "Why Pleaonastic Propositions?", last ch. of *The Things We Mean*
- Student Presentation: Schiffer, "Propositions: What Are They Good For?"

Week 12, November 16<sup>th</sup>

- Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, ch.2
- Student Presentation: Boghossian, "The Rule Following Considerations"

Week 13, November 23<sup>rd</sup>

- Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language*, ch.3
- Student Presentation: Sellars, "Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind", sections 11 - 15

Week 14, November 30<sup>th</sup>

- To Be Announced (likely Robert Brandom's *Articulating Reasons*, Intro and ch.1)