

24.729 Topics in Philosophy of Language (MIT)

Quine: From a Critical Point of View

Professor Alan Berger

Syllabus

Requirements: In addition to attending the class and doing the readings, there will be a term paper due at the end of the semester. I will say more about the term paper during the latter half of the course.

General course Description: This course will primarily discuss issues raised by Quine concerning the A Priori, and the revisability and coherency of alternative logics. We will examine in detail Quine's epistemology, especially with regard to the epistemology of logic. I primarily intend to discuss his "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" paper, his "Epistemology Naturalized" paper, and his speech Dispositional view of language and Logic. These papers will be taught together with several other papers in the literature on these topics, including some of my own. We will not do all the readings below either from Quine or from other philosophers. What we choose to read will depend in part upon time and students' interests. If time permits, we will also discuss Quine's views on various notions, such as belief attribution, necessity, both de dicto and de re, and Quine's implicit appeal to anti-haeccecticism. I will be critical of most of Quine's views.

The basic structure of the course will be similar to the tentative table of contents to my forthcoming book, *Quine: From a Critical Point of View*. (Please see enclosure.) The course will concentrate on the topics listed in Parts 2 and 3 of the table of contents to this book. We will, however, begin with topics listed in Part 1 of the table of contents.

Readings from Quine (How much of this material we will read will depend upon whether time permits): Parts of Chapter 2 of *Word and Object* (hereafter, WO), and other sections of WO; "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"; "Epistemology Naturalized"; "Carnap and Logical Truth"; Sections of *Roots of Reference*, (hereafter, RR); sections of *Philosophy of Logic*, especially chapters 6 and 7; sections from *Words and Objections*; "Reference and Modality"; "Quantifiers and Propositional Attitudes"; "On What There Is"; "Ontological Relativity"

Readings from other philosophers (Again, depending upon whether time permits): "Is Logic Empirical?" by Hilary Putnam; "Kripke on the Incoherency of Alternative Logics" by A. Berger; "'Two Dogmas' revisited" by H. Putnam; "There is at least one a priori truth" by H. Putnam; "Recent Debates About the A Priori" by Hartry Field; "Analyticity and apriority: beyond Wittgenstein and Quine" by H. Putnam; "What is Naturalized Epistemology?" by J. Kim; "Why Reason Can't Be Naturalized" by H. Putnam; "A Central Problem for a Speech-Dispositional Account of Logic and Language" by A. Berger; "The Quinean Quandary and The Indispensability of Nonnaturalized Epistemology" (revised version) by A. Berger; "Quinus ab Omni Nævo Vindicatus" by J. Burgess