

Intensionality (Graduate Seminar)

Fall 2016

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Course Description

Course Description: This course is a graduate seminar on intensionality in natural language. Intensionality is one of the phenomena that has most exercised and puzzled analytic philosophers since Frege. Intensionality is a property exhibited by certain positions or contexts within sentences; roughly, a position or context is intensional just in case the truth of the sentence does not depend solely on the extension of the expression in that position, where the extension of an expression is typically taken to be the object or objects to which that expression refers or applies. If a context within a sentence is intensional, the truth of that sentence depends on something over and above the extensions its constituent expressions. But on what, exactly, over and above extension, can the truth of a sentence depend? The dominant view can be traced back to Frege, who held that there were two kinds of meaning: sense and reference. In such cases, the truth of the sentence depends on the sense of the expression in the intensional context, as opposed to its reference. An example will be most helpful here. Suppose that John thinks elephants are cute. John need not think that the number-one killer in the animal kingdom is cute. But “elephant” and “number one killer in the animal kingdom” are coextensive: they are true of the same things. Accordingly, the truth of the above sentence must depend on something over and above the extension of “elephant”. According to Frege, the clause after the complementizer “that” contributes its sense, rather than its reference, to the meaning of the sentence. But of course, this answer may be unsatisfying for various reasons, and is one among many competing accounts of intensionality.

This course will be broken into two parts. The first part of this course will discuss the origins and nature of intensionality, and cover how various theories try to address it. This section will be partly historical and partly conceptual. Some questions that will guide us include questions such as the following: Where does intensionality come from? What is its source? What is the correct semantics for intensional constructions? What, over and above reference, could be relevant to truth? What are the existing theories of intensionality, and where do they fail, if they do? Is intensionality a purely propositional phenomenon?

The next section of the course will present the idea that a large number of semantic, perceptual, and representational verbs—verbs like “means”, “refers”, “is true of”, “represents”, “depicts”, “indicates”, “perceives”, “experiences”, and “senses”—are actually *intensional transitive verbs*. If this is true, then providing a semantics for intensional transitive verbs stands to tell us something important about the nature of meaning, perception, and representation. On this thesis, intensionality in natural language is a mark of intentionality. This section of the course will address various possible proposals concerning semantics of intensional transitive verbs, and questions concerning how such verbs might pose problems for traditional theories of intensionality.

Course Requirements

Readings for each meeting will be posted online. You are expected to do them fully and carefully

before the class for which they are listed so we can discuss them during class.

10% of your grade will be class participation. The remaining 90% will be based on the following material:

Undergrads: One midterm paper (30%, 7-10 pages) and one final paper 60% (15 pages). The final paper can be a revision or extension of the midterm paper. Consult with me about a topic.

Grad Students: One final paper (20 pages), but this paper can (and probably should) be a development of a midterm paper, if you feel inclined to submit one early. Don't feel constrained to write a *term* paper. Feel free to write a paper on a related topic that you think is interesting, perhaps with an eye to submitting it to a conference. This can be a good exercise in professionalization. I will read the midterm version and a draft of the final version and provide comments on both.

Course Structure and Readings:

Section 1: Intensionality and its History

Week 1: Medieval Origins

Readings:

- Gyula Klima: Existence and Reference in Medieval Logic (2001)
- Graham Priest and Stephen Read: Meinongianism and the Medievals (2004)
- Optional: Ebbesen, Sten: "The Chimera's Diary",
- Optional: Buridan, John: *Tractatus de Consequentibus* (selections)
- Optional: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Theories of Meaning

Week 2: The Doctrine of Sense and Reference

Readings:

- Gottlob Frege: Sense and Reference (1892)
- Gottlob Frege: The Thought (1897)
- Genevieve Marti: The Source of Intensionality (1993)

Week 3: Meaning and Truth-Conditions Readings:

- Donald Davidson (1967): Truth and Meaning
- John Foster (1976): Meaning and Truth Theory
- Donald Davidson (1976): Reply to Foster
- Scott Soames (1989): Semantics and Semantic Competence

Week 4: Modal Operators

Readings:

- Kit Fine: Modal Logic and its Applications
- Saul Kripke: Semantical Considerations on Modal Logic
- Optional: Jack Copeland: The Origins of Possible Worlds Semantics
- Optional: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Intensional Logic

Week 5: Modal Intensions

Readings:

- Rudolf Carnap: Meaning and Necessity (1947, selections), Appendix D: Meaning and Synonymy in Natural Languages
- David Lewis: General Semantics (1970)
- Irene Heim and Kai Von Fintel: Intensional Semantics, Ch. 1

Week 6: Semantics for Attitude Verbs

Readings:

- Irene Heim and Kai Von Fintel: Intensional Semantics, Ch. 2
- Robert Stalnaker: Semantics for Belief
- Jakko Hintikka: Semantics for Propositional Attitudes

Week 7: Rigidity and Two-Dimensional Semantics

Readings:

- Saul Kripke: Naming and Necessity (1970)(selections)
- Stalnaker (1974): Assertion
- Chalmers (2006): Foundations of Two-Dimensional Semantics

Week 8: The Elimination of Reference

Readings:

- Bertrand Russell (1905): On Denoting
- W.V. Quine: On What there Is (1953)
- Delia Graff-Fara: Names are Predicates (2015)
- Zoltán Gendler Szabó: Major Parts of Speech (2015)

Week 9: Non-Propositional Intensionality

Readings:

- Richard Montague: The Proper Treatment of Quantification in Ordinary English (1974)

- Jennifer Saul: Intensionality: What are Intensional Transitives? (2002)
- Optional: Friederike Moltmann: Intensional Verbs and Quantifiers (1997)
- Optional: Dowty, Wall, Peters: Introduction to Montague Grammar, Ch. 9 (1981)

Week 10: Semantics for Intensional Transitives

Readings:

- Ede Zimmermann: On the Property Treatment of Opacity in Certain Verbs (1993)
- Graeme Forbes: Attitude Problems (2006), Ch. 4
- Nelson Goodman: Languages of Art (1973), Ch. 1-2
- Mark Richard: Intensional Transitives and Empty Names (2013)

Week 11: Semantic and Perceptual Verbs

Readings:

- Roderick Chisholm (1956): *Perceiving: A Philosophical Study* (excerpts on Adverbialism)
- Elizabeth Anscombe (1965): The Intensionality of Sensation: A Grammatical Feature
- Optional: Andrew Bacon (2014): Quantificational Logic and Empty Names
- Optional: Justin D'Ambrosio (2015): Semantic Verbs are Intensional Transitives