Description
Our capacity for language allows for the expression of qualitative mental states, which typify consciousness. Language, then, is primarily an attempt to both capture and share mental states that, while qualitative, originate in the cognitive processes of our physical brains. This presents a problem, one that concerns philosophy and psychology: if language offers a robust mobilization of mental states, then does a reduction of the cognitive processes of language somehow provide insight to those mental states?

Lectures and course content will be decidedly interdisciplinary and based on several competing ideas of language acquisition, perception, and meaning. The goal of the course is to develop a keen awareness of the major theories that attempt to explain, and even limit, the scope of the relation between mental and physical states.

Readings


Assessment
Assessment will be based on attendance, participation, preparation, at least two office visits, and a peer-review research proposal. The final grade will be composed according to the following scheme:
- Attendance: 20%
- Participation: 20%
- Preparation: 20%
- Office visits (minimum of 2): 20%
- Research proposal: 20%

Schedule
(September) Searle

(October) Grice, Tomasello, Wimmer & Perner, and Kuhl

(November) Knobe and Sripada; Graziano

(December) Research proposals

Practicalities
60% of the course grade reflects your willingness to attend and properly prepare for each class meeting. A research proposal (not more than 750 words) is due on 11/20. For our purposes, this assignment should contain the general aims, methods, and significance of a proposed project, one that bears considerable relevance to cognitive science. I expect an annotated bibliography (not part of the 750 words) with the proposal. I encourage, though don’t require, you to submit a rough draft of your proposal. If you do so, rough drafts are due on 11/9. In addition, it is your responsibility to upload your proposal (and the annotated bibliography) to Bb on 11/20. Beginning 11/30, we will briefly discuss each proposal in class, with the author taking the lead in these discussions. During this time (see “December” in the schedule above), the same requirements of attendance, participation, and preparation apply. Alphabetization will provide the necessary construct here. Two office visits are required for this course: one prior to 11/1; the second prior to 12/1.

Preparedness I assume that you have an interest in the content if you are taking my course. There is a reading assignment for most class meetings. Reading and understanding this material demands close study, which is commonly achieved by re-reading. If you are unable to commit to this level of preparedness, then you should not take the course.

Course Attributes (LA) This is a liberal arts course. Through written work, class discussion, and peer-review, we will develop a demonstrated awareness of the conventions and methods associated with philosophy and its place alongside other courses that comprise General Education requirements.
Course policies Students are advised that their work is subject to the Academic Integrity Policy, found at http://policies.oneonta.edu, and their attendance to each class meeting is expected; reasons for absences should be communicated directly with me. All assignment due dates are firm and late work will not be accepted. Exceptions do occur and can be found in the Code of Conduct.