

**COURSE DATA****DATA SUBJECT****Code:** 46510**Name:** Language, truth and interpretation**Cycle:** Master's Degree**ECTS Credits:** 6**Academic year:** 2025-26**STUDY (S)**

Degree	Center	Acad. year	Period
2256 - Master's Degree in Contemporary Philosophical Thought	Facultat de Filosofia i Ciències de l'Educació	1	First quarter

**SUBJECT-MATTER**

Degree	Subject-matter	Character
2256 - Master's Degree in Contemporary Philosophical Thought	Language, truth and interpretation	ELECTIVES

**COORDINATION**

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**SUMMARY**

In *Truth and Truthfulness*, Bernard Williams (2002) identifies two ingrained tendencies in our society. On the one hand, we demand truthfulness and denounce those discourses that, for obscure and self-interested reasons, conceal or distort the truth. On the other hand, however, we are suspicious of truth. We are suspicious of any discourse that appeals to it in order to invest itself with authority. Both tendencies feed on each other: the less we believe in the truth of certain discourses, the less we trust the truthfulness of those who disseminate them, and vice versa. However, there is a clear tension between the two tendencies when they become entrenched and we generalise them to any discourse because it would make no sense to demand something (truth) in whose existence one does not believe. We seem, however, reluctant to abandon the idea of "truth". Those who distrust the truth of a discourse do so from the conviction that the truth exists but lies elsewhere; and those who see no possibility of agreement in an acrimonious debate in which they are unable to refute the reasons of their interlocutor often distinguish between "my truth" and "his truth" in order to settle the discussion. (Faced with facts that seemed to disprove some of Donald Trump's claims during his first presidential term in the United States, his press office provided "alternative facts" in support of those claims.) Why is the idea of truth so important in the architecture of our thinking? In this course we will examine some of the reasons why the concept of truth is difficult to give up, and why it is an elusive and often even contentious concept in areas where (in addition to an absence of consensus



as to what truth might be, or what should count as true) there is a clear desire for appropriation of the term between the parties in dispute.

In the 20th century, philosophers such as Quine, Davidson, Grice or Williams have conceived linguistic communication as an essentially cooperative activity in which the concept of truth plays a central role in elucidating concepts such as meaning or knowledge; or in distinguishing and interpreting intentional mental states such as beliefs, desires or imaginings. From their perspective, linguistic communication and meaning are only possible in contexts in which interlocutors share (and presuppose that they share) many of their beliefs, intentions and desires and actively cooperate to increase the boundaries of the known world (of truths) they also share. However, the 21st century has yielded a less idealized view of linguistic communication, meaning, and truth. Perhaps truth is not a robust property with a hidden nature that we could investigate; perhaps there are not even truths. Perhaps there is no neutral, shared perspective on the world; perhaps language does not seek to represent a set of eternal truths or a world that is thus and so regardless of the interests and values of those who so describe it. Perhaps language is an instrument for transforming the world and the relationships we have with other individuals according to our values and interests. All these questions will arise in the context of this course.

## PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE

### RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER SUBJECTS OF THE SAME DEGREE

There are no specified enrollment restrictions with other subjects of the curriculum.

### OTHER REQUIREMENTS

No further requirements.

## COMPETENCES / LEARNING OUTCOMES

### 2256 - Master's Degree in Contemporary Philosophical Thought

Capacidad de analizar, sintetizar e interpretar datos de índole cultural, social, política, ética o científica y de emitir juicios reflexivos sobre ellos en los trabajos escritos que se presentan.

Comprensión en profundidad de las relaciones y conflictos entre distintos ámbitos de la cultura y el pensamiento: filosofía, ciencia, derecho, política, etc.

Conocimiento en profundidad del estado de la cuestión de los debates lógicos y epistemológicos en el contexto del pensamiento filosófico contemporáneo

Desarrollo de la capacidad de reflexión crítica sobre el presente y sus problemas estéticos y culturales sobre la base de los recursos conceptuales procedentes de las diferentes disciplinas y tradiciones filosóficas

Desarrollo de la capacidad para identificar distintos tipos de discurso filosófico y formas válidas y no válidas de argumentación típicas de cada uno de ellos

Mejorar las destrezas relacionadas con la exposición y defensa oral de una disertación o ensayo, así como



la participación en debates y el trabajo en equipo.

Saber manejar con soltura las diversas fuentes de información, relevantes para la investigación (bibliográficas, electrónicas, etc.), así como la recopilación de dicha información y bibliografía con vistas a la creación de textos propios.

Students should apply acquired knowledge to solve problems in unfamiliar contexts within their field of study, including multidisciplinary scenarios.

Students should be able to integrate knowledge and address the complexity of making informed judgments based on incomplete or limited information, including reflections on the social and ethical responsibilities associated with the application of their knowledge and judgments.

Students should communicate conclusions and underlying knowledge clearly and unambiguously to both specialized and non-specialized audiences.

Students should demonstrate self-directed learning skills for continued academic growth.

## DESCRIPTION OF CONTENTS

### 1. Truth, meaning and interpretation. The idea of a shared world.

We will examine some of the classical arguments advanced by philosophers such as Quine, Davidson or Grice in favor of the centrality of the concepts of truth and cooperation in explaining the conditions that must obtain for communication and linguistic meaning to be possible. We will also look at the efforts of philosophers such as Williams to vindicate the possibility of truth and the value of truthfulness in discursive fields such as politics, history or other humanistic disciplines where both, the existence of truths and the possibility of truthfulness, have been questioned.

**2. Deflationism, alethic nihilism, performativity and relativism.** We will look at conceptions of truth and meaning that explore the expressive, performative and not purely representational dimension of our use of language. Can we transform the world by transforming the linguistic tools we use to describe it? If this is possible, to the extent that our values and interests differ, so may our worldviews. To what extent do we live in a shared world? What do we mean when we say that two mutually exclusive perspectives of the world are nevertheless equally correct as relativists hold?

### 3. Beaver and Stanley on the Politics of Language.

We will devote several sessions to examine under the format of a reading seminar the ideas defended by Beaver and Stanley in *The Politics of Language*. Princeton University Press (2023) and their critiques of



traditional theories of meaning.

#### 4. Language and perspective

In addition to sharing information about the way things are, with language we can express a perspective. What are perspectives? How do they affect our understanding of our surroundings? How do perspectives relate to language? How can we know whether we have one perspective or another? The normativity of meaning: uses, practices, and ways of life. Perspectives, characterizations, and framing devices. Pejoratives and other expressions that express perspectives.

#### 5. Philosophy of non-ideal language: Language and neutrality

Are there perspective-independent uses of language? Can language be neutral? Can it be objective? Is neutrality desirable? What is objectivity? The neutral space of reasons and its role in the philosophy of language and the promotion of injustice.

### WORKLOAD

#### PRESENCIAL ACTIVITIES

Activity	Hours
Theory	40,00
Classroom practices	20,00
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>60,00</b>

#### NON PRESENCIAL ACTIVITIES

Activity	Hours
Attendance at other activities	0,00
Individual or group project	52,50
Independent study and work	15,00
Preparation of lessons	30,00
Preparation for assessment activities	0,00
Resolution of case studies	0,00
<b>Total hours</b>	<b>97,50</b>

### TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Presentation by the lecturers of the topics established in the syllabus and participation of students in seminar sessions in which texts related to the lectures will be discussed.



## EVALUATION

Assessment of the work (essays and/or reports) written by the student (in accordance with the general specifications of the Master's Degree in Contemporary Philosophical Thought for optional subjects).

Fraudulent conduct in assessment tests and plagiarism in assessment work will be considered in accordance with the UV Assessment and Grading Regulations (ACGUV 108/2017) and the Protocol for Action against Fraudulent Practices (ACGUV 123/2020).

The use of technologies (including AI) to create assessment materials without prior and express authorization from the teaching staff will prevent them from being considered as self-authored and will be treated according to current regulations and the UV Code of Coexistence and Good Practices (ACGUV 300/2023, DOGV, no. 9747/18.12.2023).

## REFERENCES

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