

Paper topics

Assignment #1
Philosophy 415

Due date: In class, Friday, October 10.

Papers should be five pages or less in length, double-spaced and with reasonable margins and font sizes. You may choose from one of the following five topics, or come up with a topic of your own. If you do the latter, you must come see me about the topic and have it approved.

You should feel free to ask for my help in the writing of this paper. You can do that either by coming to talk to me before the paper is due, or by giving me a draft of the paper to look over and discuss with you. *If you would like me to look at a draft of the paper, you must give me the draft a minimum of one week before the paper is due.* In the case of this paper, that means that you should give me the draft by Friday, October 3. Rewrites will not be permitted.

If you are unsure what the rules for plagiarism and use of other sources are, I am supposed to direct you to <http://www.mcgill.ca/integrity/>, where you can find the appropriate guidelines.

Topics:

1. What is Frege's main argument against the view that the meanings of linguistic expressions are mental items, like mental images? Try to formulate a response on behalf of the proponent of the idea that meanings are mental. Is Frege's argument ultimately convincing?
2. State and evaluate at least one of Frege's arguments for the claim that the sense (meaning) of a linguistic expression is distinct from its reference. What does Frege think that the senses of, e.g., proper names are?
3. Russell takes one of the advantages of his theory of descriptions to be its capacity to resolve three logical puzzles he discusses in 'On Denoting.' Explain two of these three puzzles, and say in detail how Russell thinks his theory resolves them. Is the solution provided by his theory a good one?
4. Why did Russell ultimately extend his theory of descriptions to apply, not only to descriptions, but also to ordinary proper names? Evaluate his reasons for doing so.
5. Explain and evaluate Donnellan's criticism of Russell's theory of descriptions. You may, but need not, consider Kripke's response to Donnellan's argument.