

Philosophy 250

Vagueness

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Requirements for those enrolled: Seminar paper, 20-25 pages. Possibly a presentation.

Syllabus

(Definitely subject to change)

- September 13 Introductory meeting
- September 20 The Problem
Michael Dummett, "Wang's Paradox", in his *Truth and Other Enigmas* (Harvard University Press, 1978), pp. 248-68.
Crispin Wright, "Language Mastery and the Sorities Paradox", in G. Evans and J. McDowell, *Truth and Meaning* (Oxford University Press, 1976), pp.
- September 27 Some Options
Christopher Peacocke, "Are Vague Predicates Incoherent?", *Synthese* 46 (1981), pp. 121-41.
Hans Kamp, "Two Theories about Adjectives", in E.L. Keenan, ed., *Formal Semantics of Natural Language* (Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 123-55.
Timothy Williamson, "Vagueness and Ignorance", *Aristotelian Society* sup. vol. 66 (1992), pp. 145-62.
- October 4 Some Remarks on the Nature of Semantic Theory
Michael Dummett, "Truth", in *Truth and Other Enigmas*, pp. 1-24; Michael Glanzberg, "Against Truth-Value Gaps", *manuscript*
I intend during this session to sketch a conception of semantic theory which will inform my criticisms of various of the options discussed. My own views are deeply informed by the writings of Michael Dummett. For those who do not know his work, some useful first papers are "What is a Theory of Meaning?", "Language and Truth", and "Truth and Meaning", all reprinted in his *Seas of Language* (Oxford University Press, 1993). His own conception can be illuminated by comparison with that of Donald Davidson, for which see his "Truth and Meaning", in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford University Press, 1984), pp. 17-36.
- October 11 Degrees of Truth
Kenton Machina, "Truth, Belief, and Vagueness", *Journal of Philosophical Logic* 5 (1976), pp. 47-78.
David Sanford, "Borderline Logic", *American Philosophical Quarterly* 12 (1975), pp. 29-39.
For an introduction to the technical aspects of 'fuzzy logic', see J.A. Gougen, "The Logic of Inexact Concepts", *Synthese* 19 (1968-69), pp. 325-73. The classic paper on the topic is L.A. Zadeh, "Fuzzy Sets", *Information and Control* 8 (1965), pp. 338-53.
- October 18 Degrees of Truth: Objections
Crispin Wright, "Further Reflections on the Sorities Paradox", *Philosophical Topics* 15 (1987), pp. 227-90, esp. pp. 250-61.
Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness*, Ch. 4.
Mark Sainsbury, "Tolerating Vagueness", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 89 (1988-89), pp. 33-48.

- October 25 Supervaluations
 Kit Fine, "Vagueness, Truth, and Logic", *Synthese* 30 (1975), pp. 265-300.
- November 1 Supervaluations: Some Objections
 Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness*, Ch. 5.
 Jamie Tappenden, "The Liar and Sorities Paradoxes: Toward a Unified Treatment", *Journal of Philosophy* 90 (1993), pp. 551-77, esp. pp. 561-69.
 David Sanford, "Competing Semantics for Vagueness", *Synthese* 33 (1976), pp. 195-210.
 P. Grim, "Taking Sorities Arguments Seriously: Some Hidden Costs", *Philosophia* 14 (1984), pp. 251-72; R.A. Sorensen, "Precisification by Means of Vague Predicates", *Notre Dame Journal of Formal Logic* 29 (1988), pp. 267-74.
- November 8 Supervaluations: Higher-order Vagueness
 Crispin Wright, "Further Reflections on the Sorities Paradox", *Philosophical Topics* 15 (1987), pp. 227-90, esp. pp.
 Mark Sainsbury, "Is There Higher-order Vagueness?", *Philosophical Quarterly* 41 (1991), pp. 167-82.
 Crispin Wright, "Is Higher-order Vagueness Coherent?", *Analysis* 52 (1992), pp. 129-39.
 Richard Heck, "A Note on the Logic of (Higher-order) Vagueness", *Analysis* (1993), pp. 201-8.
- November 15 The Epistemic View
 Timothy Williamson, *Vagueness*, Chs. 7-8.
- November 29 The Epistemic View: Objections
 Peter Simons, "Vagueness and Ignorance", *Aristotelian Society* sup. vol. 66 (1992), pp. 163-77.
 Crispin Wright, "The Epistemic Conception of Vagueness", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 33, supplement (1995), pp. 133-59.
 Timothy Williamson, "Definiteness and Knowability", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy* 33, supplement (1995), pp. 171-91.
- December 6 Contextualism
 Delia Graff, "Shifting Sands: An Interest-Relative Theory of Vagueness", *forthcoming in Philosophical Topics* 28 (2000).
 Delia Graff, "Phenomenal Continua and the Sorites", *forthcoming in Mind* 110 (2001).
- December 13 Anti-realism
 Crispin Wright, "On Being in a Quandary", *Mind* 110 (2001), pp. 45-98.