LANGUAGE, POLITICS, AND POLITICAL THEORY

Political Science 439
Winter Quarter 2006
Thursdays, 1:00–3:50 pm, Pick 506

What are the implications of different approaches to the philosophy of language for the study of politics and the practice of political theory? In this seminar, we read and discuss a series of classic writings on language along with work by political theorists that draws on these ideas. The reading list will vary; in 2006 we focus on several twentieth-century critics of the reduction of language to a means of representation, including Austin, Searle, Derrida, Habermas and Wittgenstein. This course is primarily for Ph.D. students in political theory; enrollment will be limited and instructor consent required.

TEXTS: The following books will be available for purchase at the Seminary Coop and will be on reserve in Regenstein. Other readings are available either on JSTOR or on Regenstein e-reserve, and are designated accordingly.

J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words.*
Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc*
Jürgen Habermas, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*
Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*
Stanley Cavell, *A Pitch of Philosophy: Autobiographical Exercises*

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: A 15–20 page seminar paper, due Friday, March 17, on a topic of your choice, designed in consultation with me.

WEEKLY MEETINGS AND READING ASSIGNMENTS:

1. January 5.

   Introductory session; no reading.

2. January 12.

   2. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*

1. Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” in Regarding Method
2. Skinner, “Interpretation and the Understanding of Speech Acts,” in Regarding Method


4. (recommended only) Derrida, “Limited Inc a b c . . .” and “Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion,” both in Limited Inc

5. February 2.

3. Fliegelman, Declaring Independence, 4–28, 35–62 (notes at 211–19) [e-reserve]


1. Habermas, “What is Universal Pragmatics?” in On the Pragmatics of Communication
2. Habermas, “Excursus on Leveling the Genre Distinction between Philosophy and Literature,” in Philosophical Discourse of Modernity, 185–210 (notes at 407–409) [e-reserve]
3. Derrida, “Is There a Philosophical Language?” in Points, 216–27 (notes at 470–71) [e-reserve]

7. February 16.

1. Habermas, “On the Internal Relation Between the Rule of Law and Democracy,” in The Inclusion of the Other, 253–64 [e-reserve]
8. February 23.


4. Cavell, “Counter-Philosophy and the Pawn of Voice,” in *A Pitch of Philosophy*