

## SYLLABUS — EXTERNALISM: WORLD, MEANING AND MIND

Instructor: Dr. Cristina Borgoni

Language of instruction: English

Time: Friday 11:45–13:15

Office hours: by appointment, office 513

Place: UR09.51

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### **Course Summary**

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Externalism holds that our minds are determined by factors external to us. Externalism is the prevalent position on mind and meaning since the 70s, although there are early anti-internalist arguments already in Wittgenstein's works. This course will cover traditional arguments and respective forms of externalism advanced by Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge as well as less known positions defended by Donald Davidson and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

### **Course Objective**

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This is a philosophy of mind course with some incursions in philosophy of language. As the title indicates, the course focuses on externalist theories of mind and meaning. Very roughly, externalists hold that meanings and mental contents are constituted by factors beyond the individual. However, there are different arguments to defend this thesis and different ways to substantiate it. Our objective in the course is to examine and learn about four 'types' of externalism advanced by Hilary Putnam, Tyler Burge, Donald Davidson and Ludwig Wittgenstein. Putnam and Burge are known as the main proponents of externalism. Davidson's and Wittgenstein's externalisms are less influential, but equally important to understand the idea that our minds are determined by factors that are external to us.

### **Level of Difficult**

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This course requires introduction to philosophy. Basic mastering of arguments (i.e., to know what an argument is and how to evaluate it) is a necessary skill to follow this course. You should also be prepared to write philosophy essays since your performance will be evaluated based on them. Introduction to philosophy of mind or to philosophy of language is not required, but is an advantage. If you come regularly to the class and read

the assigned texts prior to the class, you should be able to succeed in the course. All the readings are written by and for professional philosophers. So you should not let everything for the last minute! Do not hesitate to bring your doubts and questions to class and office hours. You are very welcome to do so!

## **Course Material**

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You will find the course material at the course website (at <http://moodle.uni-graz.at>) or at the philosophy library under 'Borgoni'.

## **Assessment**

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Your grade will be calculated as follows:

1. Mid-term essay (around 3 pages each): 60%

You will write two short mid-term essays. Each is worth 30% of your grade. Guidelines will be given later in the course.

2. Final essay (around 5 pages): 40%

You will write one final essay. It is worth 40% of your grade. Guidelines will be given later in the course.

## **Schedule**

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### **04/03: Historical Context**

Reading: Burge, T. 1992, 'Philosophy of Mind 1950-2000', in *Foundations of Mind*, 2007, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 440-464.

### **11/03: Routes of Internalism**

Reading: Kripke, S. 1980, *Naming and Necessity*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.  
Lecture I.

Optional: Searle, J., 1958, 'Proper Names', *Mind* 67 (266): 166-173.

### **18/03: Attack on Descriptivism**

Reading: Kripke, S. *NN*, Lecture II.

Optional: Donnellan, K., 1970, 'Proper Names and Identifying Descriptions', *Synthese* 21: 335-358.

### **15/04: Putnam on language**

Readings: Putnam, H., 1970, 'Is Semantics Possible?', in *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers II* (1975), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 139-152.

Putnam, H. 1962, 'It ain't necessarily so', in *Mathematics, Matter and Method: Philosophical Papers I* (1975), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 237-249.

**22/04: Putnam's Externalism**

Reading: Putnam, H. 1975, 'The Meaning of "Meaning"', *MLR*, pp. 215-271.

**29.04: Burge's Criticism of Putnam**

Reading: Burge, T. 1982, 'Other Bodies', *FM*, pp.

Optional: Putnam, H. 1995, 'Introduction', *Twin Earth Chronicles*, p. xxi.

**06.05: [workshop]**

**13.05: Burge's Externalism**

**Deadline 1<sup>st</sup> short essay**

Reading: Burge, T. 1979, 'Individualism and the Mental', *FM*, pp. 100-150.

**20.05: Davidson on mind and language**

Reading: Davidson, D. 1983, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge' and Afterthoughts (1987), in *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*, Oxford University Press, 2001, pp. 137-153.

Davidson, D. 1991, 'Three Varieties of Knowledge', in *SIO*, pp. 205-220.

Optional reading: Cavell, M. 2006, 'Triangulation: The Social Character of Thought', in *Becoming a Subject*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**13.05: Davidson's Externalism**

Reading: Davidson, D. 1987, 'Knowing one's own Mind', in *SIO*. pp. 15-38.

**10.06: Three externalisms: Putnam, Burge, Davidson**

**Deadline 2<sup>nd</sup> essay**

No assigned reading

**17.06: Wittgenstein on rules**

Reading: Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, selection

**24.06: Wittgenstein on private language**

Reading: Wittgenstein, L. *Philosophical Investigations*, selection

Optional: Borgoni, C. 'Private Language and Internalism'. Unpublished Manuscript.

**01.07: Concluding remarks**