

**ENGL 5360: Contemporary Critical Theory: Donald Davidson and Analytic Philosophy  
Spring 2015**

**Instructor:** Professor Kevin Porter  
**Office Number:** 602 Carlisle Hall  
**Email Address:** kporter1@uta.edu  
**Office Hours:** TR 12:45 p.m.-1:45 p.m., and by appointment  
**Section Information:** ENGL 5360-001  
**Place and Time of Class Meetings:** 201 Carlisle Hall, T 6:00 p.m.-8:50 p.m.

**Course Description**

Within the past two decades, the work of Donald Davidson has become of increasing interest to theorists in English studies. Davidson, widely recognized as one of the most influential analytic philosophers of the second half of the twentieth-century, has developed a complex philosophy of language and action that challenges not only the work of major figures within the tradition of analytic philosophy, such as Frege, Wittgenstein, Austin, and Dummett, but also the work of continental philosophers, such as Heidegger, Derrida, Foucault, and Lyotard. In this course, we will follow the development of Davidson's thought, from his early work on the connection between meaning and truth to his later development of an anticonventionalist account of language that, paradoxically, dispenses with the concept of language. As Davidson famously (or notoriously) puts it, "There is no such thing as a language, not if a language is anything like what many philosophers and linguists have supposed. There is therefore no such thing to be learned, mastered or born with." One of the goals of this course is to try to understand the reasoning that leads Davidson to such a radical conclusion. Other goals surveying part of the analytic tradition that Davidson simultaneously extends and undermines and discussing a few of the ways in which Davidson's work has been received by scholars in English studies.

**Student Learning Outcomes**

Students should be able to:

- express ideas in clear, logical, organized, concise, and grammatical ways, in both written and oral forms
- communicate respectfully and persuasively
- perform close readings of texts in order to explicate, interpret, and critique them
- compare and contrast major themes, issues, or topics in more than one text
- assimilate existing information to formulate new ideas and applications
- make an oral defense of a position paper about a major text for the course
- develop active listening skills including paraphrasing and synthesizing ideas expressed in class
- ask thoughtful questions about the oral defenses of other students
- facilitate one-hour class discussions
- use primary and secondary research materials
- conduct independent research, using the MLA bibliography and other scholarly tools
- adhere to MLA or APA citation and bibliographic formats
- provide a broad sketch of the work of Donald Davidson and the other major theorists to be discussed

**Required Textbooks and Other Course Materials**

Austin, J. L. *How to Do Things with Words*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1976. [ISBN 13: 978-0192812056] 978-0674411524  
Davidson, Donald. *The Essential Davidson*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. [ISBN 13: 978-0199288861]  
Davidson, Donald. *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001. [ISBN 13: 978-0198237532]

**Major Assignments**

The major assignments for the course are two discussion facilitations, two position papers, an oral presentation, and a seminar paper. A separate handout will describe these assignments.

**Grading Policy**

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Discussion facilitation #1	5%
Discussion facilitation #2	10%
Position paper #1	15%
Position paper #2	20%
Oral Presentation	10%
Seminar paper	40%

*A grade of "Incomplete" will be assigned only under documented cases of extreme medical, family, or personal emergency; in all cases, the incomplete must be resolved by the start of the next 15-week semester or else the grade will be changed automatically to an "F."*

### Attendance Policy

This is a graduate-level course: therefore, attendance is mandatory, and active participation is expected. Attendance will be taken in the following way. At the start of each class, you must submit a 4x6 index card that contains the following: your name, the date, a 1-2 sentence summary of a single essay or chapter from the assigned reading, and 1 question that I may announce—anonously, of course—for general discussion. Excluding the first day of class, we have 12 scheduled meetings that involve newly assigned readings; however, since it is not always possible to attend class, I will expect from you a maximum of 10 cards, which means that you are allowed two absences without penalty. Additional cards will count as .5% extra credit; so, if you have perfect attendance and turn in the required cards, you will raise your final grade by 1%.

Please note:

- You must be present in class in order to submit reading card; I will not accept cards that are submitted via email, put in my mailbox, shoved under my office door, etc., even if turned in early.
- If you are late for class by no more than 20 minutes, please hand your card to me as soon as you enter the classroom. If I have not yet collected the reading cards, you will receive full credit; if I have already collected them, you will receive half-credit.
- Cards submitted later than 20 minutes after class has started will not receive credit; if you are uncertain about how late you are, please ask me after class.
- Cards that include only a question or a summary will receive half-credit.
- Cards that explain why you have not written a summary and question will not receive credit!
- Because I am using the cards to track attendance, they will not be returned to you. I will provide feedback only if I see that the cards are regularly failing to meet the requirements—so if you don't hear from me about your cards, that's a good sign!
- You may, of course, ask me at any time about the status of your reading cards (e.g., how many you've missed).

### Schedule of Assignments

I reserve the right to modify, as necessary, the readings and other assignments listed on this syllabus. All readings marked \*\*\* will be made available for download from a course folder in MavSpace. An electronic ticket to access the folder will be emailed to you.

1/21      **Introduction to the course: Thinking about "Meaning"**

1/28      **Propositions**

- \*\*\* Russell, "On Propositions"
- \*\*\* Ryle, "Philosophical Arguments"
- \*\*\* Wittgenstein, from *Philosophical Grammar* (Part I: The Proposition and Its Sense)

2/4      **Logical Analysis**

- \*\*\* Frege, "On Sense and Reference"
- \*\*\* Russell, "On Denoting"
- \*\*\* Strawson, "On Referring"

2/11      **Logical Atomism/Positivism/Empiricism**

- \*\*\* Russell, "Logical Atomism"
- \*\*\* Schlick, "Positivism and Realism"
- \*\*\* Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism"

2/18      **Verificationism**

- \*\*\* Ayer, "Verification and Experience"
- \*\*\* Schlick, "Meaning and Verification"
- \*\*\* Lewis, "Experience and Meaning"
- \*\*\* Hempel, "The Empiricist Criterion of Meaning"

2/25      **Mind and Psychology**

- \*\*\* Carnap, "Psychology in Physical Language"
- \*\*\* Neurath, "Protocol Sentences"
- \*\*\* Schlick, "The Foundation of Knowledge"
- Davidson, "Mental Events" (*Essential*)
- \*\*\* Davidson, "The Material Mind"

- 3/4      **Truth**  
      \*\*\*      Tarski, "The Semantic Conception of Truth"  
           Davidson, "Truth and Meaning" (*Essential*)  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, "In Defence of Convention T"  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, "Truth Rehabilitated"
- 3/11      **Spring Break**
- 3/18      **Actions and Reasons**  
           Davidson, "Actions, Reasons, Causes" (*Essential*)  
           Davidson, "Rational Animals" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "The Emergence of Thought" (*Subjective*)  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, "What Thought Requires"  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, "Incoherence and Irrationality"
- 3/25      **Radical Interpretation**  
      \*\*\*      Quine, from *Word and Object*  
           Davidson, "Radical Interpretation" (*Essential*)  
           Davidson, "A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs" (*Essential*)  
      \*\*\*      Hacking, 'The Parody of Conversation'
- 4/1      **Subjectivity**  
           Davidson, "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme" (*Essential*)  
           Davidson, "First Person Authority" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "Knowing One's Own Mind" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "What Is Present to the Mind?" (*Subjective*)
- 4/8      **Intersubjectivity**  
           Davidson, "The Myth of the Subjective" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "Epistemology Externalized" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "Three Kinds of Knowledge" (*Subjective*)  
           Davidson, "The Second Person" (*Subjective*)
- 4/15      **A Different Road: Speech-Act Theory and "Ordinary Language" Philosophy**  
           Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*  
      \*\*\*      Quine, "On Austin's Methods"
- 4/22      **Some Applications to English Studies**  
      \*\*\*      Searle, "Metaphor"  
           Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean" (*Essential*)  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, 'Locating Literary Language'  
      \*\*\*      Davidson, 'James Joyce and Humpty Dumpty'
- 4/29      **Preparation for Oral Presentations: class canceled**
- 5/6      **Oral Presentations**

**Note:** Your seminar paper should be emailed to me by 1:00 p.m. on Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. *For each half-hour that the paper is late, 10% will be deducted from its final grade.*

#### Miscellaneous Policies

**Classroom Decorum:** I treat students with utmost respect and courtesy; when teaching, conferencing, and grading, you and your work will have my full attention. In return, I ask the same from all of you: Please turn off and put away all cell phones, pagers, books from other classes, etc. You may use a laptop to take notes during class, so long as you are mindful enough not to disturb the students around you.

**Subject Librarian:** Rafia Mirza is the Reference and Instruction Librarian for English, History, and Communication. She is available to answer questions about how to access and use the resources provided by the library; and she is also happy to meet with students for a one-on-one research consultations. She may be contacted at rafia@uta.edu or 817-272-7428.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center, Room 411 in the Central Library, will assist you with any writing assignment while you are a student at UT-Arlington. You may schedule appointments online by calling 817 272-2601, by following directions available at [www.uta.edu/owl/appointments](http://www.uta.edu/owl/appointments), or by visiting the Writing Center. If you come to the Writing Center without an appointment, you will be helped on a first-come, first-served basis as tutors become available. Writing Center tutors are carefully chosen and trained, and they can assist you with any aspect of your writing, from understanding an assignment to revising an early draft to polishing

a final draft. However, the Writing Center is not an editing service; tutors will not correct your grammar or rewrite your assignment for you, but they will help you learn to solve your grammatical and organizational problems.

**Drop Policy:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**Academic Integrity:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code: *"I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code."* UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System Regents' Rule 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

**Student Support Services Available:** The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources) for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy:** The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University "MavMail" address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. **Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.** Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/>. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington. To obtain your NetID or for login assistance, visit <https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/>. If you are unable to resolve your issue from the Self-Service website, contact the Helpdesk at [helpdesk@uta.edu](mailto:helpdesk@uta.edu).

**Student Feedback Survey:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as "lecture," "seminar," or "laboratory" shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**Final Review Week:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**Emergency Exit Procedures:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located across from the elevators. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.